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"BEHOLD THE LAMB  
OF GOD"





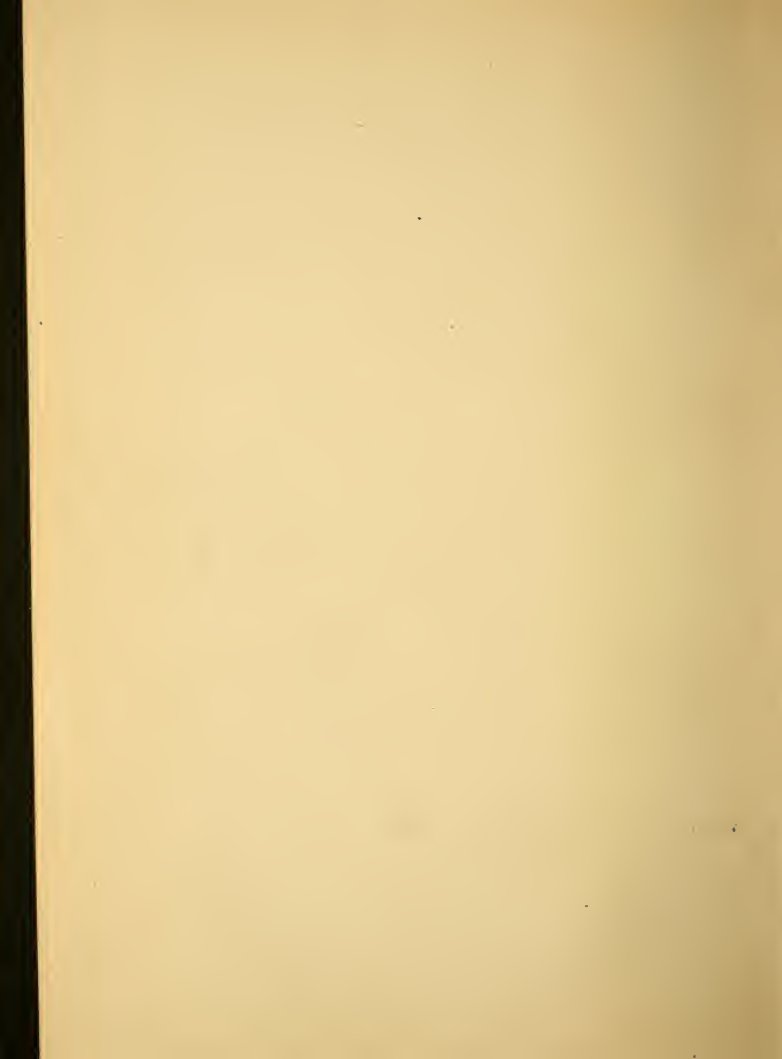
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# BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

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Lententide Sermons by Eminent  
Servants of God

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For Mid-Week Services or Family Devotion

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Translated from the German

By

F. C. Longaker, A. M., and R. Neumann

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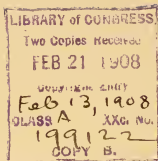
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I.

**"Behold, We Go Up to Jerusalem."**

By

**John Quandt.**

Formerly Chaplain of the Garrison at Danzig  
Pastor of the Evangelical Church in The Hague.

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**AN ANTE-LENT SERMON.**

Text: Luke 18: 31—34.

"And he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of Man. For he shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and shamefully treated, and spit upon; and they shall scourge and kill him; and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said."

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Quinquagesima, the fiftieth day before Easter, is an ancient designation for the Sunday immediately preceding Lent. Standing at the threshold of the time commemorative of our Lord's sufferings and death, this Sunday and its appointed Gospel exhort us to prepare worthily to remember the passion of our Lord. Such preparation is, indeed, necessary. Our thoughts and affections are all too much occupied with the things of this present evil world, so that we are in danger of forgetting the one thing needful. Whoever forgets this one thing needful is a lost soul, in spite of all fidelity to civil, com-

mercial and domestic duties. Men's minds are filled with plans for material successes, but Jesus Christ comes into our midst today with the solemn announcement: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." This is the lenten watch-word, authorized by our exalted Lord from his throne on high, and which we must write upon the fleshy tablets of our hearts, lest we perish in the way. Wherefore, "whoso hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

"BEHOLD, WE GO UP TO JERUSALEM."

1. Christ goes up to die for us.
2. We go up to obtain life in him.

O Lord, we, who are here assembled through the power of thy passion, do now renew our covenant of faithfulness to thee. And do thou, as sign and seal of thy favorable acceptance of this our work of praise, say to our hearts: Amen, and speak to them: Peace, peace be unto you.

I.

Over every man's life there is an inscription, which will be read at the last great day by the eternal Judge. Blessed wilt thou be, if thine inscription be not the one which appeared on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN,—Numbered, weighed in the balance, and found wanting. Over the life of the God-Man there is also an inscription, which has been read and interpreted, which is: "For you." For you he is born, for you he lived, for you he gave his life unto death and shed his precious blood.

All this, for me, to prove  
His everlasting love.

And suppose that he had not given himself for our redemption, what then? O, whither should we flee from the wrath of God? How still the fierce accusations of conscience? How silence the heart's plaintive cry for peace? Over our life's end this inscription would then be written, and only this: "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." Even if you had lived ever so nobly, my brother and sister; even if you had escaped every civil and criminal tribunal, nothing of your own could save you from the judgment of God. Certainly not your fidelity to duty, for in that you have failed countless times; nor your morality, for that was too often compromised with your carnal inclinations; nor yet your philanthropy, for love to your neighbor was often the last thing thought of by you. Nor can riches, high position, or social prestige do more to deliver you from the judgment of God than poverty or dire misfortune. Before this unapproachable Judge subterfuge is not possible, nor does excuse avail. There is but one veil to hide the consuming glory of his justice, and to make it possible for the soul to stand before him: Jesus' blood and righteousness.

God does not will that any should perish, but that all should be saved. Therefore, he has erected a lighthouse for the sinking ship of humanity; if it follows this light, its course will lead into the harbor of safety, despite its broken masts and torn riggings. This lighthouse is Jesus Christ; his light is the righteousness in his blood, and it is the only righteousness which avails before God. He hath borne all our sin, otherwise despair would be our lot. For us he strove in Gethsemane; for us he let himself be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver; for us he let Pontius Pilate despise him, Herod scorn him, and Roman soldiers mock and smite and spit upon him. For us he was scourged and crowned with thorns. For us he was crucified. "Behold the Man." And our text shows that

he knew beforehand all that should happen unto him. Wherefore, he tasted his bitter pains not once, but a thousand times. All things that were to be done unto the Son of Man were written beforehand by the prophets. "Surely, he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Thus Isaiah, the evangelist in prophet's mantle, declared five hundred years before Christ. And David foresaw the tragic scene a thousand years before: "They part my garments among them, and upon my vesture do they cast lots." The passion-flower, which blooms beneath the cross, was planted already in David's garden.

"And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things which were said." With this verse, as a text, and with it alone, ten sermons might be preached. You also may not always be understood. But, see, this was the beginning of our Lord's passion, and its bitter workings have not ceased to this day. For the twelve everything, foretold by prophets and announced by Jesus, was a hidden mystery. They understood it not. And for so many even at this day is everything, said by the Word and its ministers of the passion of our Lord, regarded as an idle tale. Right congenial to them is the carnival of shrovetide, but very much of a bore the story of the Savior's love and death. O, that not one of you may be reckoned among them. O, that you all, beloved, will hear the tender call of the wounded One, before it is too late. Your time is growing short. It is again passiontide. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." Jesus goes up to die for us.

## II.

Let us also go up that we may find life in him. When the Israelites, as punishment for their sins in the wilderness, were bitten of the serpents, Moses lifted up a brazen serpent, and whosoever looked upon it did not die. Likewise, God has lifted up his Son Jesus Christ, that whosoever looks upon him does not only not die, but receives everlasting life. The difference between those who know Christ and those who do not is altogether incomparable. O, what a difference in the daily life of the Christian and the non-Christian. At the rising of the sun the believer takes the Word of God in hand, to be quickened with the grace of the Highest for the day. Strengthened in the inner man, he takes up the performance of his daily duties: The Lord is his Refuge and Song and Salvation. No anxious care corrodes his heart, for nothing can befall him but what God has foreseen and what will prove salutary to him. If he experiences reverses in his calling, if there are hard times at home, if his heart grows heavy—even a Christian's heart is at times laden with heaviness,—he nevertheless does not despair, for his Savior comforts him: "Cast your burdens upon me; I will care for you." Neither is the Christian unduly exercised about food, or drink, or raiment. His heavenly Father knows that he has need of these things, and with that knowledge he is content. Nor is he ever alone or forsaken. Every moment he may commune with his Lord, and receive blessed answers from the ever-present Spirit. Thus, the believer's day passes, and at eventide he thankfully folds his hands and commits himself into the Lord's gracious care for the night, and rests in peace: For he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Christians are a godly race,  
Fill'd with love and power and grace,

Fleeing all that's mean and base,  
Walking in the light,  
Keeping truth and right.

My brethren, I have not attempted to bewitch you with an ignis fatuus, nor to picture an impossible paradise. Who-soever believes in Jesus Christ—looks upon the Crucified—shall enter this paradise. Nor think that what I have been saying does not apply to every walk in life. It would indeed be an evil day for our country, if the bone and sinew of every trade and profession were no longer impressed by the truth of Christ. The truth of the Scriptures is adaptable to all classes and conditions. Many have found its comfort in hours of grief and trial, but why wait until “trouble, like a gloomy cloud, gathers thick and thunders loud?”

May the coming passiontide bring you life in Christ; and, if you have already found it, may it be deepened and quickened. Let me exhort you: In the coming weeks read again the passion history of our Lord. And having done so in truth and sincerity, there will be none who has remained untouched. In this story of suffering and death, you may find comfort, quickening, peace and forgiveness. Come to Gethsemane; see the drops of bloody sweat on the Savior's brow; they were shed for thee. Come into the high-priest's palace and into the judgment hall of Pilate; in the Savior's sufferings thou wilt find strength to bear thine own. Go thou with him to Herod, and in his majestic silence learn thou to be still in thine own pains. And then go with him on the *Via Dolorosa*, up Calvary's mournful height, and, standing beneath his cross, do thou say:

O spotless Lamb, in my stead  
Thou bowedst thy bleeding head;  
Upon the tree, thou diedst for me,  
My soul to win, from death and sin.

"It is finished," I hear thee cry,  
And now I know I shall not die.

Truly, beloved, the gaities of the world, the frivolities of society, are not consistent with meditations on the passion, not even for a Protestant who needs no longer to fast. For us, if we would be serious-minded and meditative men and women, passiontide must be a *tempus clausum*, a time of retirement from everything which would at all disturb the heart in its meditation. No man can serve two masters; whoso attempts it will not obtain peace and blessing from the lententide. Could you give yourself to idle pleasures, while your father or mother, wife or child lay a-dying? Behold, a greater, than father or mother, wife or child is here.

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." Above the old Judean city the New Jerusalem, the City of Gold, the Rest of the Soul, is shining forth. No passiontide will there be commemorated, for all sighing and suffering is there at an end; instead of the cross will be found the everlasting throne; instead of the crown of thorns the bejeweled crown of glory will adorn the mighty Victor's brow. And when we have entered that City of Light, we shall with great and mighty songs praise him who went up to Jerusalem to die for us, and who in love drew us with him to give us life more abundantly.

When me, my Jesus, thou dost bring  
To thy heavenly courts above,  
I'll thank and praise thee for thy love,  
In favored strains. Hallelujah. Amen.

F. C. L.

## II.

# Lent-Observance of Mary of Bethany.

By

D. E. Quandt.

Superintendent of the Theological Seminary at Wittenberg.

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### ON ASH-WEDNESDAY.

Matthew 26, 1—13.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people. Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

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The text for this evening consists of the record with which Matthew opens the story of Christ's Passion. The last verse is



the one which every year most impresses me. It is to-night the index to our devotion. We are led in haste through the palace of Caiaphas, the high-priest, to land presently at Bethany for a quiet Lent-Observance. Bethany, the house of rest. May the Holy Ghost work in us deliverance from earthly cares, in order that God may do his work within us.

Through the palace of Caiaphas to Bethany. The high-priest, the scribes and the rulers of the people are met in council. But in this council we do not find the zeal of that council of the olden days, which Moses set apart to be shepherds over Israel, when he took of his spirit and put it upon the elders, so that the Spirit rested upon them and they prophesied without ceasing. These elders in the palace of Caiaphas were indeed zealous for the law of Moses, according to the letter, but the spirit of Moses had departed from them. They were stiffnecked, uncircumcised of heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Ghost and the most vehemently at the time under consideration. "And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him." Take Jesus! Take him by subtilty! Kill Jesus! Can human brains plan such a plot of hell? Certainly, man can do it if he permits Satan to stir up the depths of his heart. The high council in Israel, advised by the wicked one, decides upon the passion of Jesus.

But "take counsel together, and it shall come to nought,"—thus the Almighty Council in heaven has always decreed, whenever the plans of the ungodly crossed the ways and purposes of his government. With this mighty word he has split the intentions of man, as the falling rock splits the trees. Wilt Thou, then, Almighty God keep silence? Will not Thy word be heard in the house of Caiaphas: "Take counsel together and it shall come to nought?" We listen in vain—the mouth of the Most High remains silent. At this time the counsels of blind human hatred and divine Love coincide. It

was the Father's premeditated plan and will that Christ should be taken and slain, in order that his death and precious blood might bring eternal redemption to the sin-lost world. Only as to the time of the crucifixion did the counsel of malice and eternal Love diverge. The enemies in the palace said: "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." But Jesus indicating his Father's counsel and will, says to his disciples, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified." And since the highest counsel of God from eternity willed it thus, therefore the high council in Israel had to crucify the Saviour on the very feast day. We, therefore, conclude: The high council of Israel, advised by the evil foe, decrees the passion of Jesus; this council would have come to nought, not a thorn could have wounded the Sacred Head, had not the passion of Jesus been decreed in eternity, in the upper world, in the supreme council of the Holy Trinity.

Away from the palace of Caiaphas! Our souls cannot endure to dwell with those who hate peace. But this lesson we take with us:

THE PASSION OF CHRIST, ALTHOUGH INITIATED BY SATAN AND HIS HELPERS, WAS PREORDAINED FOR THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD BY THE ETERNAL COUNSEL OF GOD.

Down to Bethany! "My soul longeth for the courts of the Lord." The deed of the woman of Bethany, the benevolence of Mary toward her Lord, as a lent observance, shall be preached in the whole world, wherever the gospel of the crucified Saviour shall come; it shall be preached here to-night. Hear it, beloved, listen with open hearts, stretch forth your hands to pick the most beautiful of roses among the thorns of the Passion.

## A LENT-OBSERVANCE OF MARY OF BETHANY.

- 1) It is an observance of burning love.
- 2) It appears foolish in the eyes of the world.
- 3) It is blessed by the Lord.

## I.

"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat." Blessed words, swelling with music! Listen to the sweet strains. They sing of the lent observance of Mary of Bethany, they praise it as a celebration of burning love.

Mary of Bethany, aside from Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the three pillars, Peter, John and Paul, is the most touching figure among the followers of Jesus. We do not know much about her. But we learn of three festive hours in her life; for these we bless her.

At one time Jesus, the Prophet, entered her home at Bethany. Martha took much pains to wait on Jesus. Mary, however, considering only the one thing needful, chose the good portion. She sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to his teaching. Her heart was thirsting to drink the message of salvation from his divine lips. This was the celebration in honor of Jesus, the Prophet, a celebration of childlike faith.

The second time she expected Jesus, the King, at Bethany, He whom the Lord loved, Lazarus, was sick. She together with her sister, sent for the Master. But Jesus tarried, Lazarus died, and Mary went to his sepulchre to weep. In the midst of her mourning she had trusted in the royal power of her divine friend, she had observed a celebration of hopeful

confidence. This is evidenced in her confession at the feet of Jesus, when the Lord came, apparently too late: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Yet the Lord did more than she had dared to hope; he raised Lazarus from the dead. Behold a feast of fulfilled hope.

Today Jesus has come to Bethany, not a prophet with words of life; not a king with miraculous power. He has come as a high priest, to give Himself as a sacrifice. Today Mary does not observe a feast of faith, not a feast of hope, but a feast of burning love.

As the high priest, on the way to offer himself as a sacrifice, Jesus tarries at Bethany. The Evangelist plainly states that Jesus made this last sojourn in intuition and presentiment of his approaching passion: "The Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." That Mary also saw in him the Lamb of God innocently slain on the cross, Jesus Himself indicates, by saying: "In that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial."

Now how strange! Of the disciples it is written that in spite of all the predictions of Christ's sufferings and death, "they understood none of these things," and "this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." Of Peter even, the chief among the twelve, we hear that with regard to Christ's testimony in the last night he said: "Lord, this be far from Thee." Whence then has Mary the understanding of the approaching passion? How is it that while no one else knows of or notices your pain and sorrow, yet mother knows and notices it? How is it that while no one else realizes the ailments and wants of the babe in the cradle, yet mother finds them out? It is the working of true love.

Indeed, I am sure that all of the disciples and followers

loved Jesus, but none with the burning love of Mary. She musingly remembers his words, the words concerning the baptism with which he was to be baptized, on account of which he was straitened, till it should be fulfilled. She meditated in her heart all that which the fore-telling of his sufferings had accumulated. Her loving soul connected with all these much of the evil devices of the high council as had from time to time reached her ears. With a keen eye she looked into the countenance of the Holy One of God entering her home. Love does not calculate. Love feels, and feels more safely than all calculation can show. Her burning love detects the beginning of Christ's passion.

This, however, would be a realization of the approach of the passion only, not an understanding of the passion itself. We think too little of Mary, if we think that she loved Jesus as her friend only. Nay, she loved him with the love of a poor sinner. It was her heart's delight to drink from the lips of the living Saviour, the words of life; it was her highest glory to behold his miracles. But at the sweetest words, at the most glorious miracle, her soul did not rest. She longed for a Saviour, dying for her; a high priest, atoning with his own blood. She knew that such a one was promised by Him, who could not lie. She knew the words of Isaiah: "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." She foresaw that if this prophecy was to be fulfilled, there was one only who could fulfill it and this one was Jesus. Therefore, when she saw him turn in at her gate, she longingly looked into his eyes and read it from his features: "It is he." And while her heart bled over His going to the death, at the same time it rejoiced, since He was to die for her sins.

Might love like this, absorbed in Christ's passion, be satisfied in meditation? Indeed not. A love which receives the highest, must at the same time give the highest. He

does so much for you, it ponders, what will you do for him? Lukewarm love would have thanked lukewarmly, burning love must thank intensely. Mary takes the alabaster box containing the precious ointment, and pours it upon his head, glowing in the passion-splendor of his wounds. To him, who was about to suffer for her, she consecrates her most precious possession. Had she possessed anything better, she would have sacrificed it with like readiness. Some interpreters have said, that in the sacrifice of the ointment she meant to symbolize the sacrifice of her heart. Not only her heart, however, but her all, her whole life she gave with this ointment; the ointment flowed down from the Lord, and in the ointment her life.

## II.

"But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, to what purpose this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor." To what purpose this waste? Does not this question, following the service of love, sound like the croaking of the raven after the sweet strains of the nightingale's song have died away? How painful an experience: **The Lent-observance of burning love is foolishness in the eyes of the world.**

In the eyes of the world, did I say? Ah, it would seem here as if it were such in the eyes of the congregation, the church. His disciples are indignant at Mary's sacrifice. They are not all disciples, indeed, who bear that name. The beloved disciples do not speak as disciples should. One of them, John, at a later time than this record, reports that the inspiration came from Judas Iscariot, the traitor. Judas then already had surrendered himself to the devil. The devil is the prince of this world. Not the spirit Satan, not the church, the world was questioning thus indignantly: "To what pur-

pose is this waste?" The world deems it foolishness, this Lent-Observance of Mary! They call that waste which Mary had done at the instigation of love. "This ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor," they calculate. 'There a loving heart—here a calculating mind. There piety of heart, which cannot do otherwise in view of the sacrifice of the God-Man than to sacrifice self. Here a piety of reason, which considers it the highest deed of love, to honor the Lord in giving to the poor. Mary stands for the church. Judas, and the disciples seduced by him, for the world. Lent-Observances in the sense of Mary are foolishness in the eyes of the world, because a self-sacrificing Saviour, as well as a heart sacrificing itself to the Saviour, are against the reason and calculations of the world.

The world calls the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, "waste." To what purpose the incarnation of God, the sufferings and death of the Holy One of God, the redemption through his blood? Thus the world calculates. To what purpose all this, since the world can be happy without Jesus.

Of course, if in the eyes of the world, Christ's sacrifice is nothing, lent-observances, in whatever form they be, must needs appear foolishness also; most foolish, however, must appear a heart which gives itself a sacrifice to Christ. To give to the poor, in this act the world sees some sense; but to surrender to the crucified Saviour in glowing devotion, this is foolishness in its eyes.

Are you surprised at this? I am not. The religion of the world has no room for sacrifice, neither for the sacrifice of Jesus nor for the sacrifice of a broken heart. It has no room for sacrifice at all. Why not? Because the world neither knows the depths of grace, nor the wretchedness of sin. Only after he has learned to realize the depth of his

sinfulness, and after he has been impressed with the power of grace, i. e., after he has turned his back to the world, does the odor of Mary's ointment become a sweet savor to man.

As long as this change has not taken place in the heart, and the world refuses to recognize the sinfulness of sin, or to realize the graciousness of grace, the Lent-Observance of Mary of Bethany is foolishness in its eyes.

### III.

"When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, where-soever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial for her."

This sounds as if all the angels of heaven were touching their harps in order to drown the discord which the evil foe has sounded. Of all sweet words from the lips of Jesus, these are among the sweetest. They are a true benediction. Mary's deed receives the blessing of Christ. He blesses her sacrifice with words of praise and words of promise.

If the apostle in a passage well known to you all, praises well-doing and communicating, and adds that the most beautiful blessing of these sacrifices is that they are well-pleasing to God, we may learn from this word that the sacrifice of love is still more pleasing to Jesus than the sacrifice of mercy towards the brethren. See, Mark 14: 7. He adds, according to Mark's report, "But me ye have not always." "Me ye have not always," what does that mean but this: I part from the life in



the flesh, in order to suffer death for you; you ought to know this, since I have often enough told you; but you do not know it, nor do you desire to know it, since you neither know your guilt enough to desire a dying Saviour, nor my grace enough to see in me the dying Saviour. Mary knows both her great guilt and my greater grace, therefore she realizes that she will not have me much longer without blood and wounds. She not only knows this, but also loves me for the sake of my approaching death; therefore she has anointed me; therefore, "she hath wrought a good work upon me." Thus Jesus glorifies Mary's deed with special praise. For highly as he values the mite of the widow, much higher does he account the sacrifice of a heart surrendering to him, the Man of Sorrows, as a price of pain.

To the word of praise he adds a word of promise. "Where-soever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Here Jesus links together the remembrance of Mary and his eternal glory. And as he promised thus it came to pass:

Wherever it is praised  
 What Christ, the Lord, has done,  
 The lowly maid is raised  
 Among the heroes one  
 Who for the strife of torture and of scoff  
 Hath strewed his path with roses sweet of love.

And even in this hour again the Lord's promise is fulfilled. We, too, bless the memory of Mary's celebrating love.

I am at the end. But I cannot close properly, let the Lord close. When by the mercy of the Lord our hearts have become like Mary's heart, our Lent-Observance like Mary's

then we will not only bless the Lord with Mary, but also will we, like Mark, be blessed by the Lord.

O Lord, close this service in memory of Thy passion, close it with that same blessing, with which Thou didst bless Mary of Bethany. Amen.

R. N.

### III.

## Lessons on the Way to Gethsemane.

By

Consistorial Councillor

**Dr. Rueling.**

† Court Chaplain at Dresden.

---

### THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT.

Luke 22, 31 and 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

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O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us! With this ancient hymn, which we chant in connection with the consecration of bread and wine in the Holy Sacrament, I begin this series of passion sermons. I implore Almighty God that He may bless our Lententide, in order that the word of the cross, foolishness to many modern Greeks, a stumbling-block to many modern Jews, may to you become more and more the power of God. Since this word, "Christ, the Lamb of God," originated in the mouth of John the Baptist, we infer that Christ himself in his baptism in the Jordan foresaw a type and a prophecy of his last sufferings, so that before entering through the gate of his holy passion he informed his disciples, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." At the baptism of adult Jews or Gentiles, as well as in the case

of our infant baptism, the ritual prescribes that the subject of baptism should be marked with the sign of the cross; then God should be invoked over it; then its confession heard; and finally its head sprinkled, while the sacramental words are uttered. Behold this same order of things in our Lord's baptism of sufferings. The sign of the cross He bore from a child by virtue of prophecy; the old masters painted the infant Jesus lying on a cross or with a little cross in his hand. Most of all, Jesus marked himself with the cross when, after the last passover with his disciples, he passed the bread and the wine, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body; drink ye all of it. This cup is the New Testament in my blood." Then followed the invocation of God. Not by another in his stead, but He himself, the Lord, in Gethsemane invoked his Father, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." This again was followed by a great confession. For when, in the presence of the whole council, in answer to the command of the high priest, "I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us, whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God," Jesus replied, "Thou hast said," and in confirmation of this impressive, "Thou hast said," added, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." He bore testimony of himself. And this confession given before the highest authority of the people, in the face of death, as a holy oath, to this day in every true believer removes every doubt of the Deity of Christ. This testimony He confirmed before Pilate in majestic speech, before Herod in majestic silence, until finally at His ascension He crowned this confession by inserting His own name between that of the Father and the Holy Ghost. The confession now as the grand finale, is followed by the baptism of his sufferings. When the fearful Roman lashing lacerated his back, when the rude multi-

tude played a scornful masquerade with the King of Heaven, when thus disguised the Holy One of Israel was given over to the scoffing of the whole rabble, when finally in agony of death He suffered the punishment of an evil-doer, he might have exclaimed: "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts; all Thy waves and billows are gone over me." This was indeed a baptism of sufferings. A baptism, however, in which He did not remain under water, but as every subject of baptism is purified, so He came out of the destruction of death to a joyful resurrection; after the cross of Good Friday, the joy of Easter.

Thus in quick succession the whole passion of Christ has passed in review before our eyes. Step by step we will now follow it in our Lenten services, seizing the words which Christ spoke on that short but all-important day, and hearing the words also which were spoken concerning him.

We place ourselves, in spirit, in that night between Thursday and Friday. It was about 11 o'clock. The passover of the Old Testament had been followed by the passover of the New Testament, the institution of the Lord's Supper. The hymn had been sung; the disciples, except Judas, proceeded with the Lord out of the city on the hills, down the steep path to the brook Kidron. The moon full-orbed illumines the scene. In its soft glow we see glittering over from Mt. Moriah the marble walls of the temple. The Lord continues the earnest conversation of the Holy Supper: "Yet a little while am I with you. Ye shall seek me and as I said unto the Jews, whither I go, ye cannot come." And Peter replied: "Lord, whither goest Thou?" And the Lord turns to the questioner: "Whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards." And Peter retorts: "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." And the Lord: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to

have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Says Peter to him: "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison and to death." And Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." Such the conversation on the way to Gethsemane. In it we find the text indicated: It will be before us a Warning, a Consolation and an Obligation.

Let me ask: WHAT LESSONS DOES JESUS TEACH ON HIS WAY TO GETHSEMANE FOR OUR DAYS OF TRIAL?

- 1) That we have an enemy, threatening in the depths of hell.
- 2) That we have a friend, interceding in heaven.
- 3) That we have a duty toward the friend who saved us from the enemy; the duty to strengthen the brethren.

#### I.

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God. To him, God, whose faithful servant he was, sent one trial after the other to test his piety. And one day, when the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan, the evil angel, came with them to slander Job: "Doth Job fear God for nought? Put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." You know how Job fooled Satan and held fast to his faith, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and how ultimately he was justified, and rewarded by God.

We are reminded of this old story, when here we hear the

Lord say, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." We do not know whether or not the adversary of God and his kingdom had accused these simple fishermen and publicans, elected to be the apostles of Christ; whether or not he had put forth the claim, "They are no pure wheat; let me touch them, let me shake them through the sieve of trial, and you will see that they are but chaff." As long as the twelve were in the personal ward of their Master, as long as they were not separated from Him, as Judas now was, the evil one was unable to touch them. But after the shepherd had been smitten and the sheep were scattered, the wolf had an easy game, and he selected as his prey the chief among them, knowing that the others would follow. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee," the Lord says. Not unintentionally, he calls him "Simon," the name by which he was known among his people before Jesus called him. He warns the disciple, since he was born flesh from flesh. He addresses him separately, since on account of his temperament he was the one most endangered. Jesus says, "Simon, Simon," to make the more urgent his warning. He wants him to remember this earnest plea in the hour of temptation. Should we be surprised at Jesus' manner of speaking, connecting Satan with his own last experiences and the consequences of these for his disciple? Here the whole depth of sin became apparent. Sin appeared in its true nature: Enmity against God, rebellion against God! For the only Sinless One, for the only Holy One who ever walked on earth, SIN had prepared the death of a criminal on the gallows! Only hell and its tools could accomplish this. The whole extent of sin became manifest. Behold, all the organs of public service, in state and church, united for the execution of Jesus of Nazareth! The high council, with its chairman, the high priest; the Roman governor and his

soldiers; the tetrarch of Galilee and his courtiers; the two great politico-religious parties in Judea, the Pharisees and the Sadducees; the people incited by them; and added to all, one of the disciples, Judas, the spy, who had sold his Master for the price of thirty pieces of silver. Truly a formidable organization for resistance against the living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who had promised to send this Messiah. Was it not a well-planned, infernal federation? Now we understand why Jesus, who with divine eyes looked through this whole gruesome connection, called out, "Satan hath desired to have thee." And the disciples themselves, at the time they did not understand it. But after the Holy Ghost had enlightened them, and led them into the depth of the truth, then—their epistles are a testimony—they looked through the veil of outward occurrences into the dark abyss, where the prince of this world breeds his nefarious plots against the kingdom of heaven. And how they did warn their congregations against the devil, who goes about like a roaring lion, lying in wait in the dark like a wily serpent, seeking, whom he may devour!

I now ask you, is it not true that we have an enemy threatening in the depths of hell? Or is humanity too well educated to understand the connection between the world of good and of evil spirits? O, the same Lord and Saviour, who attributed the failure of a good sowing in turn to the hard or thin, or stony soil of human hearts, also said of the weeds, sown among the wheat: "An enemy hath done this." Do you intend to be more learned than your Saviour? Indeed, we have an enemy, threatening in the depths of hell! It is not the way of the Word of God to expressly attribute all evil to the personal devil. It says, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." It describes the history of sin: "Every man is tempted, when



he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." But in all the great battles, such as that between belief and unbelief between Christ and antichrist, between the holy order of God and the powers of anarchism, the Scriptures trace evil to the ultimate source. Behind the atrocious acts which ungodliness generates, behind the discourses of blood and incendiarism, delivered by fanatical men and women, we surmise the secret superhuman background. We say, "These tongues were fired in hell." We give warning to all in Christ, to all desirous of salvation: We have an enemy, threatening in the depths of hell! How strange to hear people deny the influence of invisible powers upon heart and life, a kingdom of darkness with a powerful prince to rule it, when Jesus on every page of his gospel assures us of it. "Superstition," we hear a voice crying; and yet how many are occupied with this invisible world! I refer to the ever-increasing deception of spiritualism. I know educated men, who formerly looked with contempt upon the believers in a world to come, who denied the power of God, who now are sitting in the half light of locked chambers, amidst the spirits, where into a circle of half-witted, ignorant confessors the spirits of the dead are cited and their revelations listened to as a gospel. These same men, who formerly denied the existence of God, believe this, although God has revealed nothing of it, nay, has expressly forbidden in his law to ask anything of the dead. But when Jesus says, "Satan has desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat," they shrug their shoulders and will not believe.

Dear Christians, take to yourselves the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. You have your Gethsemanes, you see times of suffering, or you see them approaching in your failing health,

or in the lingering illness of father or mother. Times of hard battles with flesh and blood, with conditions around you in your calling. You implore, "Father, if it be possible, remove this cup." Do not enter into the battle or trial like Simon, who fancied himself safe in the path of righteousness, but who after all was so weak that a little danger and disfavor overthrew him. Raise the question within yourself: What if the enemy of my soul and my salvation should desire to have me? I will watch, and humble myself under God's mighty hand, that He may help me, that I fall not into the net of the evil one. If such is your disposition, then you may say with Luther:

This world's prince may still  
 Scowl fierce as he will,  
 He can harm us none,  
 He's judged, the deed is done,  
 One little word o'erthrows him.

This Word is Jesus. Therefore, we proceed:

## II.

We have a friend interceding in heaven. This is the second lesson on the way to Gethsemane, for our Gethsemane hours. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," Jesus continues. Did this really come to pass? Simon, thinking rather that the heavens could pass away than that he could forsake his Master, had made his way to the court of the high priest's palace. Arrived there, he had been driven by the trivial scorn of the servants to make the cowardly declaration, "I know him not, I am not the man, I am not a follower of Jesus of Nazareth." What a contrast between this cowardice and the heroic confession, "I am the Son of God," made

by Christ before the chief council. And further, where was Christ's intercession when Simon Peter, in order to escape, applied to himself in deed the word addressed in warning to the Master a few days before, "Spare thyself," taking shelter behind the lying declaration, "Man, I know not what thou sayest." Nothing but chaff manifested itself in this disciple. And so we ask again, where is Christ's intercession?

Jesus did not intend to pray that the sifting be spared Peter and the rest. By no means, but only that the chaff that was in them should come to light, an everlasting gain to Peter, in order that the wheat which was in him might be purified. His deep fall was to be the cause of Simon becoming Peter, the rock. "That thy faith fail not," this was the import of Christ's prayer, and thus it came to pass. One commentator says: "If Satan, whose injurious influence reaches no further than his chain, had been given room, to precipitate the disciple after his fall into despair, Peter's end might have been similar to that of Judas." He may be right. But God be praised, on account of Christ's intercession, Peter's faith did not finally fail him. Scarcely had the cock crowed, and with his morning alarm awakened and terrified the sleeping conscience, when the whole conversation of the night came back to Peter; the prediction of his fall as well as the assurance of Christ's prayer in his behalf. Now his heart, amid streaming tears, embraces the mercy of the Lord and draws this consolation: It is not all over with me. Despite this ignominious defeat, I may yet return. Thus he did not hasten to secure the rope, he did not, like Judas, run for the tree above the steep precipice. He hastened into solitude, he wept bitterly. His repentance worked that godly sorrow which is unto salvation not to be repented of. The device of the evil foe for Peter's destruction was turned by means of the great intercession into blessing and life. The chaff of natural virtue,

the former ground of Peter's reliance, was driven away; the pure wheat of grace remained in his broken heart

We have a friend, interceding in heaven. The Christ, condemned by Caiaphas for blasphemy, led to Pilate, tried and crucified, now intercedes for his own at the Father's throne. As on the way to Gethsemane, providing care for his small fold occupied his soul, so does it still, when in his hands he holds the reins of government of his church. For he still beholds the infernal eagles drawing their circles closer and closer above the heads of his beloved, seeking to snatch the lambs away from his fold. Or are we to apply his consolation and promise to his disciples only? We have, as we will remember, among the discourses at the institution of the Lord's Supper, recorded by John, what we call the high-priestly prayer. This prayer of Jesus is an index of the intercession of Jesus the high priest. We read, John 17, 9: "I pray for them, which Thou hast given me; for they are thine;" and a little farther on, "those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled." But we also read in verse 20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word." This refers to us, as many as have been joined to him in faith, as many as can sing with the pious Count Zinzendorf:

Thou, Christ, the Head, and we the members;  
Thou, Christ, the Light, the lustre we;  
Thou, the Master, and we, the brethren,  
As Thou'rt ours, belong to Thee.

We have a friend interceding in heaven. He prays for us. Now our faith may be tempted, assailed, shaken; but fail—it cannot.

I behold you, pressed in the oilpress of suffering—(Gethsemane, that is, oilpress). Even now some of you are in distress and anxiety, and the prospects are for further visitation rather than alleviation. Often in secret do you venture the question, and by and by you ask it louder and louder, "Can it be God who does this? Can God see his poor creature thus vexed in sorrow? Can He not help, or does He not want to help?" Your faith wavers. It turns to the modern philosophy of pessimism, which teaches, God would be the devil himself, if He had made all this misery; there is no God, and therefore non-existence is the best fortune. Your faith is wavering, but, behold, your high-priest intercedes that your faith fail not. He calls you through his servants, through tried friends. Again you stand below the cross, you feel coming over you new strength to bear with your lot, until you can say, "It is finished." You walk through the valley of the shadow of death, but Christ's intercession is a rod and staff to comfort you.

I behold you with a soul sick of sin, desiring to be free from its slavery. Ever and again with redoubled force sin returns. You pray, yet your sin is stronger than your prayer; you are about to give up the fight with the cry, "I am lost." "I cannot change," you exclaim; "God has forsaken me, if there is a God." Dismiss the thought. The high-priest, who has shed his blood for you, watches your agony; in spite of your sin, he loves you. He intercedes "that your faith fail not." Depend on it; seize the forgiveness of sin, and as often as sin has overpowered you, make your way anew to the heart of the Intercessor and you will find that He, your deliverer, will finally help you to gain the victory, so that with Luther you may triumph: "The bonds are broken, my soul is free."

What would be our life, if we were not borne up by the intercession of the Friend of our souls. Our only confidence

amidst earth's misery is his merit, not our own. From how many a fall has He kept us! When heaven and hell, all unknown to ourselves, were struggling for our souls, how often has He saved us from falling into the abyss of eternal misery!

Prepare, ye christian friends, to-day  
 The foes have sought you for their prey  
 Yea, Satan has desired you.  
 Put on the armour of God's Word  
 And fight with vigor, undisturbed  
 That ye may all his viles undo.  
 And should he still assail  
 Here's our IMMANUEL.

Hosanna!

Lo Satan yields,  
 Christ the sceptre wields—  
 He stands victorious on the field.

### III.

Christ's exhortation is not finished. He adds a far-reaching, earnest commandment to his promise: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

What is here, before Peter's fall, indicated as his future calling, Jesus afterwards repeats in other words. Along with the threefold question: "Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou me," he gives the threefold commission: "Feed my lambs." And thus it was fulfilled; thus it is to this day. Anyone desirous of becoming a pastor of the flock, must have given evidence of a broken and contrite heart, must have learned to confess, "By the grace of God I am what I am." The shepherd of the sheep must be able to say from experience, the grace of God has found me; he must realize that of his own strength he can do nothing, it is Christ in his sufficiency. Then only will he

not in haughtiness despise the weak in faith, then only will he strengthen weary hearts and support the stumbling feet; he will not condemn the poor sinner, he will not crush the broken reed, but help his fellowmen in meekness of spirit. A proud Pharisee is not fit to be a pastor. Peter in after years truly did strengthen the brethren and became a pillar of the church. Truly did he fulfill the promise given by Davil in the 51st psalm after his fall, "I will teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." When in his pentecostal sermon he confessed Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, and preached with such power that the hearts of three thousand people were pierced, he strengthened his brethren. When before the chief council, after the edict had gone forth, forbidding to preach in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, he exclaimed, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," then and there he strengthened the brethren. When afterwards during another persecution he declared, "We ought to obey God rather than men," he strengthened the brethren. When at the synod at Jerusalem he endorsed the work of foreign missions and sided with Paul, saying, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they," he strengthened the brethren. Finally let us scan the holy record in Peter's two epistles, and especially that glorious chapter treating of the blessings of the cross and of the glorious hope, and surely we must confess: Peter did carry out the commission given him by the Lord. Having been converted himself in the battle of repentance, he afterward strengthened the brethren, and still strengthens them; yea, will strengthen them as long as the book of Acts and his two epistles shall be read.

But the commission to Peter is given to us all. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." To us also belongs this duty. I speak to those who at one time were indif-

ferent towards the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, but who, whether through the preaching of the Word, or by special experiences in life, have come to appreciate the sad condition of the natural heart, have been converted to Christ, and are now saved by faith. Do you think it right, to desire salvation for yourselves only, and to let others run to their destruction? What can I do? you say. I am no pastor, no preacher. I grant this. Yet you may faithfully give expression to your faith when meeting with doubters of and unbelievers in God's grace. You may warn the wayward children of the world in their sinful course, or those who stray in forgetfulness of their confirmation vow. You may console and strengthen the sick, who it may be have no consolation of faith and no eternal hope. You may testify the peace which rules in your heart, now that the storms of doubt and unbelief within you have been abated by the grace of God. Let me assure you that the testimonies of a believing soul, of a plain Christian, have often done more than all the words of a faithful pastor, who was not understood, whose business it is, as men say, to pray and console. You may strengthen your brothers and sisters.

The self-righteous Pharisees of rationalism as well as the giddy Sadducees of materialism still call the Lord of Heaven before their judgment seat. They claim that Jesus falsely proclaimed himself the Saviour and Messiah, they deny him his divine honor and attributes. They tell us that their reason has carefully scrutinized it all, they assure us that all of his history is nothing but poetry, or a mixture of truth and poetry, at best. In such cases it becomes our duty to give utterance to our religious convictions. We dare not, as we prize our soul's salvation, be silent, or even say with Peter before his conversion, "I know not the man," I am not versed in these things, I cannot debate them. In the spirit



of thanksgiving for what Christ has done for us we must joyfully exclaim: I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. That means to strengthen the brethren.

Let us do this. Fight the good fight of faith. You have, indeed, an enemy, threatening in the depth of hell, but you have also a Friend interceding in heaven. This friend is far mightier than that foe, and you must win over for the cause of this Friend those who are still following the banner of Satan, in order that they too may find forgiveness and peace in his holy and precious blood. I have always somewhat hesitated to sing with the late Novalis his blessed hymn:

If a l l in faith would fail Thee,  
I always will be true.

But every Christian will be glad to join the last stanza, as giving expression to a petition for himself and to his hope for others who have not, as yet accepted Christ:

"I've felt Thy blessed nearness  
O don't depart from me;  
Let ever in Thy kindness  
My heart be joined to Thee.  
Some day my wayward brethren  
Will eyes turn heavenward  
And seized by love unbounded  
Embrace Thy bleeding heart. Amen. .

R. N.

IV.

Peter's Denial.

By

Dr. William Wiener,

Dean in Worms.

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THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT.

Text: Luke 22, 54—62.

"And they seized him, and led him away, and brought him into the high-priest's house. But Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the court, and had sat down together, Peter sat in the midst of them. And a certain maid seeing him as he sat in the light of the fire, and looking steadfastly upon him, said, This man also was with him. But he denied, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou also art one of them. But Peter said, Man, I am not. And after the space of about one hour another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean. But Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said unto him, Before the cock crow this day thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly."

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In Christ Jesus dearly beloved. 'Today we behold again the suffering Savior, and may his holy eye probe the inmost depths of our souls. We read in the first verse of the text: "And they seized him, and led him away, and brought him

into the high-priest's house." There they condemned him to death. But for what?

"We cannot understand the woe  
Thy love was pleased to bear;  
O Lamb of God, we only know  
That all our hopes are there."

"The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." By reason of his unjust condemnation, we shall, if we believe, escape the most just judgment of God. But while the trial is going on in the palace of the high-priest, another event is transpiring which must not be omitted from our lenten meditations: Peter's threefold denial of Christ. How the Lord's sufferings must have been intensified by that deed of darkness. O, were there not thorns enough in his path to Calvary, that his fleeing, denying, betraying disciples must scatter more and sharper ones! Peter's denial is indeed an integral part of the Savior's passion. Let us, therefore, seriously consider this wavering of Peter. What does it preach to us? Is it not the word: "It is a good thing for the heart to be established by grace," by grace, and not by a mock heroism? And when we later consider the repentance of Peter, then soon to be restored, what is the word of encouragement to be learned from his conversion? Is it not again the truth: "It is a good thing for the heart to be established by grace," by that grace which is powerful in the humble and meek? Today, then, let this text speak through me and apply the lessons

OF PETER'S DENIAL, OR—

IT IS A GOOD THING FOR THE HEART TO BE  
ESTABLISHED BY GRACE.

A salutary exposition of this truth is

1. Peter's fall, and
2. His repentance.

O Lord, who didst comfort thine apostle by declaring unto him, that thy grace is sufficient, and that thy power is made perfect in weakness; grant unto us, we beseech thee, that we may glory in our weakness, so that thy mighty power may dwell in us. Thou alone canst grant unto us both to will and to do those things which are acceptable in thy sight; create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us, that we may heartily love and joyfully confess thee in the midst of every temptation, and grant that in every time of trial and in the dark hour of death, we may joyfully sing:

"I rest me here without a fear;  
By thee shall all be given  
That I can need, O Friend indeed,  
For this life of for heaven.  
O, make me true, my heart renew,  
My soul and flesh deliver;  
Lord, hear my prayer, and in thy care  
Keep me in peace forever." Amen.

"It is a good thing for the heart to be established by grace."

# I.

Of this truth Peter's fall is a quickening commentary. Guided by the text let us prayerfully apply it to our own hearts and lives.

Verse 54. "But Peter followed afar off." Since we may interpret a man's character by means of his deeds, let us read

Peter's heart by following in detail his denial of the Lord. What was it, then, that impelled him to follow into the high-priest's house—into danger? Pride, curiosity, and love. Pride. When the Savior was foretelling the desertion of the disciples, Peter exalted himself above the rest, and proudly declared: "I will lay down my life for thee." And as the Master was warning him of the threefold denial, he no doubt kept thinking: Good, we shall see; my devotion is not yet recognized. My word is my bond. Thus, in his own estimation he thought himself strong enough to pass on through the gates of the high-priest's palace, saying to himself: Why should I remain behind? On, follow him. Though he felt himself restrained as by a hundred arms, his obstinacy prevailed, and Peter followed from afar into the court of the high-priest's house. Need we be surprised that he fell? For "pride goeth before a fall," and, "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Never imagine that, to withstand temptation, it is enough to be strong in the flesh: temptation is a monster, breathing pestilence and death, against which the weapons of a carnal warfare are not sufficient. If you must go among the enemies of Christ, and mingle with them in the varied relationships of life, think not that "a bold front is half the battle." Remember Peter. Peter was further impelled by his curiosity to follow the Master. Certainly, he wanted to see the outcome of the trial and of his expected lieutenancy in the Kingdom of Jesus. But doubtless love for his Lord also drew him on. "Should I not," he thought "also share his trials, who shared so many of his joys?" His heart was stirred by many conflicting emotions. It was no longer fixed like the rock, but unstable as sand. See him now in the court of the high-priest's house.

Verse 55. "And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the court, and had sat down together, Peter sat in the midst

of them." In that cold night they kindled a warm fire, but hotter was the fire of their hatred toward Christ. Before that fire Peter sat, warming himself, and acting as though he had no interest at all in the proceeding. The hero is on dangerous ground. There he sat and heard how the Lord was despised and condemned. And as he saw the unfavorable outcome of the trial he shook as with the chill of a fever; his bravery trembled in the balance. But see; he will directly play a still more pitiful role.

Verse 56. "And a certain maid seeing him as he sat in the light of the fire, and looking steadfastly upon him, said, This man also was with him." In this maid the power of darkness approached the unguarded heart of Peter. At other places in the Gospels, and especially in the passion-history, only believing women are mentioned, that they might be examples to you, my sisters, who in these days should be especially active in the service of the Lord. Particularly should you not walk in the ways of Eve, enticing others to unbelief and sin. O, for how many denials of the Lord have women been responsible? On the contrary, they ought to exercise a religious influence over men, especially over their own husbands. It is distressing enough, when a man tells his wife upon her return from church, that she is not to mention the name of Jesus in his presence; but it is a thousandfold worse, when, like a Job's wife, she entices her husband to curse God and die. Not all men can withstand like Job.

Verse 57. "But he denied, saying Woman, I know him not." In Gethsemane Peter had drawn a sword and smitten off a servant's ear; but in the court of the high-priest's house a maid—a lady of the broom—causes him to quake and tremble. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt; who can know it?"

Verse 58. "And after a little while another saw him,

and said, Thou also art one of them. But Peter said, Man I am not." Concerning his doctrines, the Jews had inquired of Christ, and in reply he referred them to his disciples. This, then, was Peter's opportunity. Now he might have kept his word, and answered bravely for his Master. The council had sought, (and found) false witnesses against Christ. Here was an opportunity for a true witness effectively to contradict false testimony. But what does Peter do? Hear him: "Woman, I know him not." "Man, I am not."

The Evangelists show how restless Peter became. Now he followed from afar, now he sat by the fire, now he walked about on the porch, wavering, uncertain, like a flickering light. And, my brethren, you will be like Peter, if your heart is not established by the Lord's grace.

Verse 59. "And after the space of about one hour another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." This time his speech betrayed him. The true Christian is also betrayed to the men of the world by his speech; for he does not curse and swear, as they do; he is not familiar with their jests and sacrilege; nor does he say, "For Goodness' sake," but, "If God wills," instead of "accident," he speaks of "providence," in place of saying, "inbred weakness," he gives it its correct name, "sin." For this he will be derided and mocked, and unless his heart is established by grace, he can never hope to win the victory. Peter is a warning.

Verse 60. "But Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest." The hour is growing dark for Peter, and, as Matthew relates, he began to curse and to swear: "I do not know the Man." In the most shameful manner he transgressed the Second Commandment. O, Peter, Peter, how art thou fallen. "Who-soever commits sin is the servant of sin." When the Alpine

snows thaw and loosen, they form a mighty avalanche, sweeping down the mountain side carrying death and destruction in its wake. Peter, it is true, did not, like Judas, betray his Lord and Master; but—and was not that enough?—he denied him. He was basely ungrateful toward his Friend and Master, the Son of God. To such lengths he was carried by his unstable heart. “It is a good thing for the heart to be established by grace,” and by grace alone.

Therefore, “blessed are the poor in spirit.” Do you feel yourself right strong? Beware, Peter’s experiences will soon be yours. Or, is it going too far to say that it is still possible for men to deny the Lord? Let us see: You come into the society of men who despise and mock and deride Christ and his disciples; if you do not attempt to curb their vain-glorying; or, if you are amused by their blasphemy and jest, do you not under the circumstances say: “I do not know the Man?” Or, if you do not try to quicken the mere nominal Christian by showing to him the wonders done by Christ in your own soul, or the miracles wrought in the Church, do you not then deny your Lord? Or, you, who in your confirmation consecrated your whole life to Christ and his service, but since then have rejected Word and Sacrament, have you not for years denied the Master? Be warned: “Whosoever will deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.” And you, who attend regularly the public worship, and glory in the cross, you must order your lives in accord with the doctrines of our Savior; your religion must be a reality in your business and conversation; you must renounce envy and revenge; in fine, you must become a living member of that body of which Christ is the Head. Unless you do, your deeds deny your profession, and the world reads in your lives that you are ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. O, beloved, we have all denied Christ numberless times. Let us



not be ashamed to acknowledge our sin and repent. Peter's fall forever proclaims: "It is a good thing for the heart to be established by grace."

We are greatly encouraged to believe this truth.

## II.

By Peter's repentance.

For, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Verse 60. "And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew." This had been foretold by the Lord, and his word is faithful. This cock-crowing was for Peter, a call to repentance. Thus, we also may be admonished to repentance by the daily crowing of the chanticleer. We daily deny our Lord, if not in open sin, at least in the imagination of our hearts. And, if we were forgetful of our Christian privileges, and became coarse and immoderate in our pleasures, O, may the morning and its cock-crowing lead us to repentance. Not without reason did our forefathers place cocks upon their church-spires; the sight of them was to preach repentance. Yes, may the lofty spires on our churches point us heavenward, whence Jesus gives grace, upon grace, and let us ever humbly pray:

"My soul, be on thy guard;  
 Ten thousand foes arise,  
 And hosts of sin are pressing hard  
 To draw thee from the skies.  
 O, watch, and fight, and pray,  
 The battle ne'er give o'er;  
 Renew it boldly every day,  
 And help divine implore."

And may the funeral bells, echoing the tramp of the solemn procession to the grave, stir your soul within you and move you to fall weeping at Jesus' feet to pray for grace and guidance to lead you home. And may the Word, so richly preached, be to you a spiritual cock-crowing, telling of the dawn of a better day. In the day of your prosperity turn to the Lord with all your heart, that he need not awaken you by messengers of woe. For his fallen disciples, the agonizing Savior has yet another remedy.

Verse 61. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said unto him, Before the cock crow this day thou shalt deny me thrice." The Lord looked upon Peter, and, O, what a look it must have been! O, that we might fathom its depth. Must not the fallen disciple now be reminded of his boast, and be brought to an utter distrust of his own strength? Must the Lord not bid him to flee, lest he fall as low as Judas? Thus, touchingly Jesus must preach to Peter: "Because of thy proud boast, I became dumb as a lamb; because of thy denial of me, I now acknowledge myself as Lord; and in this thy silence, I speak to thee, and lay down my life for thee, that thou mayest be lifted up." Behold, brethren, today the Lord looketh also upon us with a most benignant and merciful look. Can we withstand those eyes? O, may we never refuse to have him look upon us. By means of that look he pleads with us by day and by night: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Therefore,

Come, ye weary sinners, come,  
 All who feel your heavy load;  
 Jesus calls his wanderers home:  
 Hasten to your pardoning God."

And a word to the catechumens, who will soon come to

the confessional for the first time. Let the Savior by his benignant look ever search your souls. And to those who will come to the Lord's Table during Holy Week, let me say: Come with hearts broken by your Savior's look.

Verses 61, 62. "And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said unto him, Before the cock crow this day thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly." Pathetic indeed is this picture of Peter weeping. He can endure it no longer before the fire in the court of the palace. With his face hidden in his mantle, to hide the uncontrollable flow of tears, he hastens out to his own desolate and lonesome chamber. The bitter tears, which for so long had not wet the furrowed cheeks of the man, cannot now be restrained; they flow on and on during that whole terrible day. Such tears, as those of Peter, tears of hearty repentance, and not merely of sentimental emotion, you should weep when you hear the passion story. Nor need you be ashamed of them. Or, if the eye remains dry, let the heart be wet with your penitential sorrow. Such tears David shed, when Nathan the prophet reminded him of his dual sin, and he confessed with anguish: "Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." That he could so forget God is the wound in David's heart. That he had denied his loving Savior is the bitterness of Peter's soul. Behold here that "godly sorrow," working repentance unto salvation, a repentance which brings no regret. This sorrow so moved Peter that he is not again seen among the disciples until Easter morning. Moreover, its fruits are made permanent by the thrice repeated question: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Three times his pride had led him to deny the Lord, therefore, to be restored, he must be humbled three times. But after that his heart was fixed, for it was Peter who first preached Christ and him crucified on Pentecost. After his conversion, Peter,

like a true rock, was unwavering in confession, going joyfully to prison and bearing faithful witness to Jesus. He pressed on as far as the Euphrates to preach the Gospel, and died upon a cross at Rome, \* and thus with his blood sealed his testimony to Jesus. Then only did he become that Rock upon which the Lord would build his Church. "It is a good thing for the heart to be established by grace." "Blessed are they that mourn." Wherefore, beloved, let your hearts be established by repentance and faith. Henceforth joyfully confess your Lord and Savior by a faithful use of the means of grace, Word and Sacrament.

When the risen Savior first talked to Peter after the denial, he did not call him "Simon Peter," but "Simon, son of Jonas," because he had not only denied the Lord but proved untrue to his God-given name. Thus, in our baptism, the Lord has also given us a Christian name, that we might be continually reminded of our covenant privileges. But how often have we heard our Christian names without at all being reminded of our covenant with God? How often have we denied Christ? O, so many have long failed to confess him, and have neglected Word and Sacrament. And, if he should speak to them, as he did to Peter, he could not call them N. N., but only N.

"It is a good thing for the heart to be established by grace." Let us then continually acknowledge the Savior by a faithful use of the means of grace, and of prayer. Let our homes be turned into temples of God, and our children brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Let us today bid farewell to every compromise with the world, and by word and deed show our sincerity in the faith. "It is a good thing for the heart to be established by grace."

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(\*This is a Romish tradition. Tr.)

"I will leave my Jesus never,  
On the cross for me he died;  
Love shall draw me to him ever  
At his feet I will abide.  
Of my life the Light forever,  
I will leave my Jesus never.

Not the earth with all its treasure  
Could content this soul of mine;  
Not alone for heavenly pleasure  
Doth my thirsty spirit pine;  
For its Savior yearning ever:  
I will leave my Jesus never."

F. C. L.

V.

## The Ways of Judas.

By

Lic. theol.

G. Leonhardi.

† Pastor at Zschaitz.

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### THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

Matthew 27, 1—5.

When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

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Our text tonight paints for us the ghastly picture of a storm-tossed soul. The ruin in faithless repentance of Judas, the traitor, teaches whither the false penitence of the ungodly ever must lead. Out of the sorrow of the world into death: out of despondency and perplexity into the depth of suicidal despair.

Could there be found a darker counter-part to the cross, the tree of Calvary,—on which dies world-conquering Love, seeking sinners, pleading for souls, opening the gate of para-

dise for a dying malefactor,—than the dead, leafless tree above the precipice of Gehenna, on which Judas, the traitor, hangs himself?

Shall we not, must we not, with fear and trembling, consider the ways which led to such a gruesome end?

#### THE WAYS OF JUDAS, AN EARNEST LESSON OF WARNING FOR THE FAITHLESS CHILDREN OF OUR DAY.

Let this be the theme of our Lenten thoughts tonight. These are:

- 1) Ways of worldliness, surrendering Christ for the earth.
- 2) Ways of false penitence, which strives to extricate from the consequences of sin.
- 3) Ways of faithless despair, ending in suicide.

#### I.

We meet Jesus on his way to the judgment-bar of Pilate. The rulers of the Jews have pronounced over him the death-sentence. The confirmation of their verdict on the part of the governor is the next requirement. Judas is standing by the way. He sees them lead away Jesus, in bonds. He hears that He has been condemned to death. Repentance seizes him. But it is not the "repentance which needeth not to be repented of;" he is not terrified at his deed; he is only perplexed and alarmed over its consequences. He beholds the bloody harvest, for which his treason had furnished the deadly seed. The blood money burns in his hands, the price for which he had betrayed his Lord and Master, and brought him to the death of the cross.

Behold, then, whither leads worldliness, which surrenders Christ for earthly things. It is to this day the Judas-mind,—the desire for low gain, the spirit of wretched avarice and love of money,—which commits treason against the highest and holiest: the truth of God, the love, faith and trust of man. It has its beginning in excessive care for earthly things; it proceeds in faithlessness towards God and fellowmen; it ends in the surrender of the highest good, one's own soul. Does not every-day experience show examples by the thousand that attest to the truth of Scripture: "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." The get-rich-quick scheme is a manner of gaining possessions alien to God's appointed way, the way of honest labor and modest frugality. The passion to gain money at any price, even by the help of Satan, in spite of God's word and will,—this is the chief disease of our times. It is a devastating epidemic, which in a thousand forms rages in city and in country. Here this epidemic defrauds the poor working-man of his hard-earned wages, and lets his family starve in indigence. There it robs the employer of his time, supplies, fields and fruits. Here it incites the inconsiderate merchant to false wares and weight, to fraudulent bankruptcy, and draws thousands to perdition in the fury of speculation. There it robs God of his honor on the Lord's day and sacrifices the consolation of faith, the peace of a good conscience, the purity of the body, the reputation of a good name and all for the small price of the wages of sin—a few pieces of silver. And yet, there is no greater, no more ruinous loss, than the loss of one's soul, the loss of better convictions, the loss of our eternal portion. There is no more fearful exchange, than to give one's soul for the price of the world, sin and death, earthly gain and enjoyment. "What is a man profited," the Sav-



hour says with a pitiful glance upon Judas, "if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? Or, what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

## II.

Judas thought to give something in exchange for his soul. He brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." Yet the world, the cold and heartless world, has no mercy, no appreciation of such a confession of guilt. The reply of partners in sin is at all times the same: "What is that to us? see thou to that."

He who with his repentance and confession goes no further than to the world, to the companions of and helpers in his sin, cannot hope for consolation or mercy. The world has but scorn and scoff, or at best, false advice and false consolation for the repenting sinner. The deceived in vanity and sin may forever implore the deceiver, she may upon her knees bring the price of sin and with tears in her eyes, make the beseeching cry, "Return to me my faith, my peace, my honor!" There will be but the same cold and heartless reply: What is that to me, see thou to it. That man is forsaken and utterly lost, who, terrified at the consequences of sin, strives to save himself, who flees to man instead of running into the open arms of his gracious Saviour and Redeemer. For no man can by any means redeem or heal his brother. Lost and forsaken is he, who in false repentance seeks escape from sin's results rather than from the bond of sin itself. Casting away the vain prize of sin, you do not throw away sin's heavy guilt. Vain endeavor, poor, blind Judas! There is One only who can heal the deep wounds of the soul, who can redeem and save from sin; it is the same One, who looked upon Peter with such a divine look of holy love and pity, that after

his denial "he went out and wept bitterly;" it is the same One who raised the penitent Magdalene out of the dust with the work of pardon and consolation: "Thy sins be forgiven thee, depart in peace."

Be ye mindful of this, ye broken and contrite hearts, ye forsaken and lonely ones, dismissed by the heartless world, into the selfmerited misery and trial of sin. Do not seek help where none is to be found. Do not stun the signs of your poor souls by entangling yourself still more with the cares of this world. You cannot cover sin with sin, nor extinguish fire by pouring oil on it. "Seek ye the Lord, while He is near; Call upon Him while He is yet near." "With the Lord there is mercy and with him is plenteous redemption." Even Judas might have found grace, if he had repented and confessed before the Lord, instead of before the Jews.

And you, who bear within you a spark of the Spirit, a spark of the love of Christ, you, who see that mercy towards sinners, the miserable and lost, is a quality and trait of godliness, do not pass coldly and indifferently the misery of the world. Help to direct the erring on the right path, to restore the fallen in the spirit of meekness. Show them, lead them to the fountain of grace and truth, of salvation and life, even to Christ Jesus; and remember, "he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death." O, if all Christians would turn their hands to the work of home missions, how many a soul might be saved from the stream of bodily and spiritual perdition. How many a soul might be turned from the way of Judas, the way whose end is faithless, suicidal despair, to find the Lord of life and salvation!

### III.

For note the fearful end of Judas. Seeing himself de-

spised and rejected by his companions in sin, "he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and went and hanged himself." Miserable end, in night and woe. Truly an illustration of the word, "The sorrow of the world worketh death."

A man who has no consolation beyond that which the world affords, when the world pushes him aside, must despair. In the shipwreck of faith a man must drown in the waves of anxiety and despair if no help is offered. A brilliant author has called unbelief the suicide of the soul, and indeed, it is this, inasmuch as it renders the world godless, robs life of its inner, eternal content, leaves the soul without consolation or hope, and suffocates the breath of spiritual life, prayer to God. Suicide in mental aberation, even if interwoven with the secret threads of human guilt and sin, deserves our pity. Suicide, however, resulting from frivolity,—when a man has grown weary of the lust and cares of the world, and throws away his life like a husk or an empty shell, instead of renewing it in the strength of the Holy Ghost,—is the mark of modern heathenism. It reminds us of the word of the Lord, that unbelief is the greatest of all sins. For if a man does not fear God, how shall he respect men? He who does not consider his own life, what care can he feel for the life and welfare of others? It is the nihilism of unbelief, that is the doctrine of the great nothingness, by which every thing high and noble is destroyed, which turns its weapons, whether speech or sword or pen, not only against those in high rank, but as well against fellowmen, wife and innocent children, murdering and coldbloodedly dragging with him everything over the precipice of despair into eternal death.

These are the ways of Judas, which proceed from the surrender of these highest and holiest possessions, the truth and love of God in Christ, for the gain of earthly enjoyment, and which through false sorrow end in the abyss of despair.

Therefore, beloved in Christ, see to it that none of you have a wicked and unbelieving heart, which would depart from the living God and be hardened into the deception of sin. But having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, shed for the remission of our sins, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, and let us hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering; for He is faithful that calleth; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; for if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. For it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Luther prays and we unite with him:

Our sins, o Lord, our God,  
 Into fear of hell must drive.  
 Whither shall we flee for aid  
 That we save our wretched life?  
 Unto Thee, o Christ, our Rod!  
 Thou hast shed Thy blood so pure,  
 Hast atoned that we endure.  
 Holy Father, our God, our Lord of Sabaoth.  
 From our faith, o loving Saviour  
 Never let us fall or waver. Amen.

R. N.

## VI.

# The Choice Between Christ and Barabbas.

By

**Dr. M. Frommel,**

Superintendent in Celle.

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### THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

Text: John 18: 38—40.

"And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find no crime in him. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? They cried out therefore again, saying, Not this Man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."

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The passion story is the incomparable part of history. From year to year it is told in the churches and schools of Christendom, and we have known it from our youth up, yet it constantly reveals new depths, and teaches fresh lessons for the individual and the community, both with respect to a fanatical ecclesiasticism, as represented in Caiaphas, and a neutral state-craft with regard to Christ, as shown in Pilate. Nor could it well be otherwise. The Savior himself, who is the blessed subject of this story, is the neverfailing Source of wisdom and light, continually refreshing our spirits. In the passion everything combined to humiliate him, but in the midst of it he only became more majestic. The deeper his enemies sought to bury him in oblivion, the higher he rose in the esteem of the world and in the affections of his own. In his sacrificial pa-

tience, in his royal silence, in his deepest humiliation, he became crowned with a glory and an honor which, from year to year, and from generation to generation, win him the love and devotion of the humble and broken hearted. From this incomparable history, let us today take a small part as the basis for our meditation—a part in which light and darkness are most vividly contrasted. Our text prompts us to consider

#### THE CHOICE BETWEEN CHRIST AND BARABBAS.

1. Israel's choice.
2. Your choice.
3. God's choice.

#### I.

Our text leads us into the very midst of the Lord's civil trial, before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. The highest authority according to Roman law had just declared before all the people that Jesus was innocent, that neither his accusers had proved anything against him, nor could the judge find him guilty of a crime. It would, therefore, have been Pilate's duty to have let Jesus go, and to have protected him against his enemies. But, instead of that, he began to temporize, and would not alone decide the matter at issue. Though he knew that for envy the chief-priests had delivered Jesus, though he was convinced of Christ's innocence, though he had openly pronounced the sentence: "I find no crime in him," in spite of all these things Pilate undertook to play a neutral role. Refusing to come out on the Lord's side, when the charges against him had not been proven, he still wanted to be impartial as between the accusers and the Accused, as between Christ and his deadly enemies. Thus, he put himself on the down grade, on which his speed accelerated at every step, with no hope of ever stop-

ping until he became the open enemy of Christ, and his judicial murderer.

Beloved, there is no neutral ground as between light and darkness. In the realm of the spiritual Jesus Christ is the line of demarcation, as he said: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." Whoever wants to be impartial, and to regard Christ and Christianity as one side, and his enemies as the other, has already taken sides against Christ; he has set down divine truth as a mere human opinion which may be variously held and interpreted. Such a man, without convictions of his own, and swayed by the majority, is to be reckoned among Christ's bitterest foes. Christ is the way, the truth and the life; his antithesis is the life and death. Either, or—either Christ leads you into the truth, and is the way of your life in time and eternity, or you reject his guidance, do not come out on his side, and thus remain without a way unto life, to be sunk, confused and lost, into the abyss of the darkness of death. Verily, this desire to remain neutral with respect to Christ is the cancer of our times. It is thought that this attitude of impartiality displays great depth of character and much wisdom. But because of it, there is so little whole-souled confession of Christ and so much wavering halting in the things that pertain to life. Men are convinced of the exalted character of Christ, of the truth of Christianity, of the pitiableness of his enemies, and yet they are ashamed openly to identify themselves with it, and joyfully to confess Christ, and accept the blessings of the Church. But woe unto them that halt. Woe unto them that want to be neutral with Christ. "Whoever will be ashamed of me and of my words before this adulterous generation, of him will I also be ashamed before my Father who is in heaven," saith the Lord. Wherefore, do not forget that great consequences depend upon your decision.

You will build your character either into the light or into darkness.

Because Pilate wanted to play a neutral role, he was compelled to abdicate his office and to let others decide what should be done with Jesus—he appealed to the people. It occurred to him, that an excellent way out of his quandary would be to avail himself of a Jewish custom which required that at the passover some prisoner should be given his liberty. He determined, therefore, to submit the question of Christ's release to a popular vote; not he, but the people, are to determine the fate of Jesus.

We have here one of the earliest examples of popular suffrage, and the result fails to commend the practice. \* \* \* What concern was it to that Jewish rabble, by courtesy called "the people," as to what became of either Jesus or Barabbas? If one had been asked at night: Why did you prefer the insurrectionist and the murderer? his answer would doubtless have been: Because the majority did. But why did the majority vote as it did in this case, as in every other? Because the leaders wanted it so; the chief-priests controlled the vote. Thus, the verdict of the people is swayed. In the wilderness they wanted to make Jesus a king; in the judgment hall they asked that he be crucified.

But Pilate imagined that he had managed the affair quite adroitly by letting the people decide as between two such opposite characters. On the one hand stood Barabbas, an insurrectionist; on the other Christ, so rigidly obedient to the principle: "And unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's;" Barabbas, a murderer; Christ, the Savior, who had done so much good, healed so many sick, and raised some of their dead. One would imagine that the choice ought not to be difficult as between the sinister character of Barabbas and the benevolent life of Jesus. But they all cried out, saying: "Not this Man,



but Barabbas.' Thus, Barabbas received every vote; Christ not one. It remains the perpetual shame of mankind that this deed was not only possible, but that it was actually done. O, let us be warned by it. Let us not depend on our benevolent wills to check crime; for a humanity, capable of that deed in Pilate's judgment hall, is capable of the blackest crimes. It was indeed an eventful hour, when Israel, as represented by its priests and rabble, rejected their King, and chose Barabbas with the proud boast: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children." And his blood did come upon them in the terrible destruction of Jerusalem, a disaster unparalleled in the history of the world; and since that day Israel is a wanderer on the earth, without a country and without a temple, as so ably pictured in Ahaseurus, the Wandering Jew. But, what is the situation in our country? Suppose that this same question should be submitted to a popular vote. Would not thousands and hundreds of thousands give their votes to the revolutionists, whose cry would be: Release unto us Barabbas? "But Barabbas was an insurrectionist and a murderer." It is true, a certain number would still say: "Thine we are, O Jesus, and we will walk with thee, Thou Son of the Highest." But the proportion of those making this confession would be small, and their voices would scarce be audible above the uproar of the multitude. O, my country, my country, should it ever come to this, that thou wouldest reject thy Jesus, a fate no less terrible than that which overtook Israel would be thine: his blood would be upon thee and upon thy children.

In the midst of their wild uproar Jesus opened not his mouth, suffering in silence. No sound moved his holy lips, but he endured patiently the insult of Pilate, offered in that implied proffer of mercy as against the verdict of that tribunal to which, in his weakness, he had appealed. Only to the guilty can clemency be shown. Is Christ not guilty, as Pilate

had declared, how was it possible for him to show mercy? Then it was Christ's right to be set free. But Christ permitted himself to be contrasted with Barabbas, to be rejected by the people. And let us never forget that he who is there on trial is the Holy One in Israel, the only perfect Man, the everlasting Son of the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth. O, what thoughts may well have stirred his heart, when he heard the people's verdict: "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Thus, they showed that, in their estimation, the insurrectionist and murderer was worthier than the Son of obedience—than the incarnate Love of God. Jesus was silent, but his mute, pale Form might be taken to say: What have I done to you, my people; how have I injured you? Answer me. But Jesus was silent. Here the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled: "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised; and we esteemed him not." That Barabbas should be preferred instead of Jesus, that the Holy One should be crucified between two thieves, shows how little the Jews esteemed him. They regarded him as more dangerous to the common weal of State and Church than two murderers. Their outrage upon him breaks his heart. Barabbas chosen, Jesus rejected; Barabbas held worthy, Jesus intolerable in the eyes of the people; Barabbas released, Jesus led away to be crucified—truly, this is the climax of the passion and the depth of woe for the ever blessed Lord Jesus.

## II.

You have heard what choice Israel made, now inquire into yours. Condemn Israel not, until you have searched your own heart. Or, do you not know that you are required again and again to choose as between Christ and Barabbas? In every temptation which assails you, the necessity to choose is thrust

upon you. When you consent to sin, you release Barabbas, the insurrectionist and rebel against God's law, and the murderer of your soul. With every deliberate sin, you reject Jesus, and show that you do not want this Man to reign over you. When you are enticed by lust, a contest begins, a choice must be made: "Whom shall I release unto you?"—and your conscience will tell you that you have scores of times already cried: "Not this Man, but Barabbas." But how strange: Barabbas is so loathsome, and Jesus so lovely. Righteousness is a virtue, and sin is a shame; covetousness is despicable, and to give is more blessed than to receive. Drunkenness is beastly, yea, it degrades man beneath the brute. Voluptuousness is despicable, and chastity a shining jewel. Pride, anger and envy are hateful, and humility, meekness and love without condemnation. But alas, alas. The Lord has told us: "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil." If, therefore, we examine ourselves, Israel's choice will declare how we need to repent of our own; and, if we see ourselves in the Word, as in a glass, there will be nothing left for us but to smite our breasts, and to say:

"Who is life in life to me?  
 Who the death of death will be?  
 Who will place me on his right  
 With the countless hosts of light?  
 Jesus Christ, the Crucified."

### -III.

This is the last part of the choice which was made in the palace of Pilate. In the whole transaction only one man found joy: Barabbas. He obtained his liberty only in the condemnation of Jesus, otherwise the cross would have been his fate.

But there was found for him a Savior, who suffered in his stead.

Taking this view, the whole proceeding becomes an illustration of the choice and election of God. God looked upon the scene from his exalted throne, and, behold, there stood Barabbas—Adam and all his generations: mankind, which by sin was sold into the bondage of sin—Barabbas, we are Barabbas, the insurrectionists and rebels,—and over against this fallen humanity stood Jesus, the only Begotten of the Father, in whom he is well-pleased. And, lo, Jesus gave himself unto death, that we might be free. The Father releases Barabbas, but Jesus, the beloved Son, is crucified. "Him who knew no sin, he made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him."

"Wherefore, God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Thus, the narrative of the choice as between Christ and Barabbas presents to us a picture of the great work of redemption and of the vicarious sufferings of Jesus Christ. Did I say, A picture? It is more: it is the literal essence of the whole transaction. If it were not, surely God would have bowed the heavens, and come down to put a stop to that terrible travesty on justice. Jesus, the Lamb of God, in his vicarious sufferings, often let glorious rays of his divinity fall upon mankind, but here he veiled them all to make possible the release of Barabbas, and the rejection of himself. Therefore, too, he was able to maintain such majestic silence and to suffer so patiently, for he knew that he was doing it all in obedience to the Father's will, who also gave him the bitter cup to drink; yes, he did it because of his own great love for the world which he had come to redeem. Here is the very kernel of the text: Barabbas—you are he, and I am he, insurrectionists against God and his holy will;

Jesus obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: in your stead, in my stead.

Beloved, whoever takes this view of the matter, and repents of his sin, and has his Barabbas nature changed, and believes in Christ, the Substitute and Surety for his soul, he will learn to choose Christ for time and eternity, as his One and All, as "the one thing needful," as "that good part," which Mary chose, which shall not be taken from him; he will be brave enough under all circumstances to stand boldly on the Lord's side, and to say with Paul: "I count all things but loss and refuse that I may win the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and be found in him;" he will no longer want to occupy middle ground and waver like Pilate, but whether the priests cry or the mob howl, he will lift his voice high above the din, and give his vote: Not Barabbas, but Jesus the Savior, whose I am and whom I serve.

Blessed is he who makes this choice. Amen.

F. C. L.

VII.

**ECCE HOMO: Behold the Man!**

By

**F. Dransfeld.**

Pastor at Coepenick.

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**THE FIFTH WEEK IN LENT.**

Text: John 19, 5.

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

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If anyone should ask me which of all the paintings I have seen has made the deepest impression on my soul and has spoken the most eloquently to my inner life, I would without a moment's hesitation reply, Reni's Ecce Homo. One has to stand before this beautiful painting for some time in order that its beauty may work on him. You never will forget the look of those eyes, which, as it were, burn into your soul. How wonderfully are the noblest humanity and the sublimest Divinity combined on this picture! How touching the trace of pain on the countenance of the Divine Sufferer! It was this picture which, seen in cheap reprint in a plain peasant's home, so touched Count Zinzendorf on his wanderings through the country, that from that moment he became one devoted to the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Ecce Homo! This I did for thee, what hast thou done for Me?

Do you wish to see the proto-type of this picture? Look to our text. The gate of Pilate's judgment hall swings open;

Jesus advances; Jesus, adorned with a crown of thorns, clad in purple. Pilate himself becomes the passion preacher, he sets the title to the living picture: ECCE HOMO! that is, Behold the Man!

We find a fourfold meaning in this expression. It is a word—

- 1) of deepest contempt;
- 2) of intense confusion;
- 3) of high admiration;
- 4) of faithful adoration.

#### I.

A word of deepest contempt. We can see, methinks, the satirical curl around the lips of the Roman governor, as he speaks these words. It may appear as if he desired to call forth the pity of the people; but that cannot be, since he has no pity himself. Jesus is a picture of disgrace and suffering. A picture of shame. He stands, indeed, adorned as a king. He wears a crown, but it does not gleam with the lustre of jewels and pearls, as the crowns of worldly rulers do. It was grown for him on the land full of thorns and thistles.

O Sacred Head, now wounded,  
 With grief and shame weighed down,  
 Now scornfully surrounded  
 With thorns, thy only crown.

He wears the purple, but not as king Herod in the company of the great ones of his kingdom, not even as the rich man in the house of earthly abundance. It is in an old soldier's cloak, worn and torn, that He is attired. And we step

up to the throne of the Father, with the purple in our hands: Behold, whether this be thy Son's gown? And this self-same form of torture, this picture of misery and shame, should be destined to lift the Roman empire off its hinges? Impossible! you exclaim. Ah, beloved, we know that He not only moved the Roman empire, not only all the kingdoms of the earth, but heaven and earth has He moved. "He upholdeth all things with the word of His power." And yet He is a picture of suffering. Down from his forehead drops of blood are trickling, where the thorns have torn his flesh. Thou noble countenance, the terror and fear of the ungodly at the judgment to come, now spit upon! His back and face show the bloody marks of the lash, and of the rude fists of the soldiers. His eye filled with sadness, glances over the multitude surrounding the steps of the judgment hall, clamoring in favor of Barabbas, the thief. He hears them calling down the guilt of his blood upon their children. His friends have left him. He must tread the winepress alone.

This is the course of life. He who is in evil plight needs not to search for scorn. He stands despised in the eyes of the world. As long as the sun of happiness is shining, as long as we enjoy strength and health, we are surrounded and flattered by any number of friends. But let trials break in upon us, and we will have the contempt and scorn of the heartless world to endure. Thus Jesus was despised, so that even men hid their faces before him. Behold the Man! To this day Jesus stands in the world despised and rejected. Behold the Man! thus we hear a voice from the lowest of the people, those among whom the spirit of antichrist makes fists at the Holy One and His church; who, if they only could, would crucify him anew. Behold the Man! Thus we hear it among the high in rank also, at their extravagant feasts. In the company of the drunken winebibbers he is derided, the man



of sorrows, in words of deepest contempt and frivolity and scorn. To the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks, foolishness. Behold the Man.

## II.

Upon closer consideration of this word of Pilate we recognize in it an expression of intense confusion. It is a confusing feeling to see a man suffering innocently. Behold the Man! What has he done? Why does he have to suffer? What is his guilt? What are his crimes? Would you know what he has done? Ask the lepers who have been cleansed or the blind who now can see, the dead who have come back to life; they will tell you what he has done. Call the poor, who have received the consolation of his gospel; call the weary and heavy laden who have found rest; call the lost sheep that were found by him,—they will tell you what he has done. Who among you can accuse him of one sin? Not Caiaphas, not Pilate, not Herod, not the thief on the cross, not the centurion, not unbelief, not criticism, not anarchy. No one, on earth or in heaven. Says St. Paul: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Do not these words present to us a picture of Jesus Christ? "All splendor of the Cherubim and holiness of Seraphim, compared with him is darkness sheer." He suffered innocently! How confusing. And still more does it confuse us to see someone suffer innocently in our stead. Look at the picture closely. It is the picture which your mirror shows you, you see yourself in it. Your sin he has borne; the sorrow that should plague you rests on him; the punishment that by rights you should suffer, he endures. It is for me He stands there, the

atoning one, bound hands and feet. Behold the Man! A picture of intense confusion.

### III.

Never! And therefore not without the highest admiration. He is the most beautiful among the children of men. It is the task of art to represent the beautiful. What is the most beautiful thing in the world? The image of Jesus Christ. Art, therefore, always returns to him and finds in him the one great subject of its most perfect work. In the world the conceptions of beauty are diverse and one-sided. We can see only what is before our eyes. The world admires a beautiful face. But there are beauties which the world does not appreciate. There is a beauty of suffering. We often find it verified in the case of sick persons, who otherwise have nothing attractive about them; the longer they bear their cross in patience, the more their faces become beautified by the expression of suffering. "Thro suffering the Master stamps his image in the heart." And this image is mirrored in the face. It seems as if the divine sculptor was putting his modeling hand to the form of a man most especially in the time of suffering. We now understand why Zinzendorf, contemplating the suffering Saviour, said: "Every new day Thou appearest more beautiful to my eyes." A face is beautiful when through its eyes gleams the lustre of a pure soul, or when through the window of the eye you can look into the sunlit closet of a peaceful heart, unmoved by the storms of passion. The eye is the light of the body and the mirror of the soul. What a soul was mirrored in Christ's eye! A face is beautiful, furthermore, when it testifies to meekness, humility and patience! And who was equal to Jesus in this respect, as beautiful as He? "He did not chide, when He was chided, He did not threaten when He suffered, but put it into the hands

of Him who judgeth in righteousness." And how does love, the greatest among Christian virtues, crown with shining glory the children of men, even on earth! Jesus is Love eternal. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends!" "Having loved his own, He loved them unto the end." Here are the open arms of Love, the love of Him who looks in favor on the repenting sinner. We stand before him in highest admiration. His very beauty lies in this, that for our sakes He made himself of no reputation. Behold the Man!

#### IV.

Great surprise is caused in Israel, when the high form of Saul was seen among the prophets. "Has Saul gone among the prophets?" Balaam, the seer, was sent for and intended to curse Israel, but, alas, against his own will he becomes a prophet of blessing. Caiaphas, the highpriest, prophesied perdition upon Jesus, but in this very prophecy he pronounces blessing. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." There is an unconscious prophetic office, a prophetic office against the will of the one prophesying. Pilate does not realize that with his exclamation he becomes a prophet, that his word lets us look down into the depths of Deity. Behold the Man! Hardly a man any more, and yet a man indeed! The most perfect man, and more than a man, at once man and God, God-man, "true man, born of the Virgin Mary, and also true God, begotten of the Father from eternity." It is He, in whom God and man are united, in whom all perfect fullness appears. "For in him dwelleth the fullness of the God-head bodily." We fall prostrate at his feet; we adore him: "My Lord and my God." Some time He will come again in the clouds of heaven. His sign, perhaps the sign of the cross. But not in its dark surroundings as on Calvary, but transfigured by

the morning-glory of eternity, will it announce his second coming into the world. "Then shall they look on Him whom they have pierced." "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same,," will it sound over the whole world, from the lips of trembling foes, now overcome, as well as out of the hearts of joyful disciples who have turned upwards their eyes in faithful adoration. In the tongues of men and of angels will it sound: Ecce Homo! Behold the Man!

We bow before him in faith and sing:

O Sacred Head now wounded  
 With grief and shame weighed down,  
 Now scornfully surrounded  
 With thorns thy only crown!  
 O Sacred Head what glory,  
 What bliss, till now, was Thine.  
 Yet though despised and gory,  
 I joy to call Thee mine! Amen.

R. N.

## VIII.

# The Two Malefactors a Mirror of Humanity.

By

**O. Brennekam.**

Pastor at Moehringen.

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### THE SIXTH WEEK IN LENT.

Text: Luke 23, 39—43.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

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O day of gloom and sadness  
As midnight's hour dark  
O day of love's warm brightness  
As never sun could mark.

His heart filled with anxiety, the father goes out to seek the lost son; his heart is breaking on account of the guilt and misery of the child. He does not rest, through heat or cold, pain or danger of death, until his child is found and taken by the hand back to the peace of the parent's home.—Mother's heart is breaking on account of the disgrace into which the world has drawn her daughter; she feels it more

intensely than the daughter herself. She follows her steps; she does not shrink from the mire which has soiled her garment, neither from the moral mire into which she must descend. Be she ever so low, love allows no rest, no peace. Onward, onward, lower and lower, until her child is found. And when she has found her, whatever and wherever she may be, she plucks her out of her surroundings, draws her to her heart in burning love, and takes her home to begin the task of blessing, of cleansing her child from the mire. First to save,—then to cleanse. This is the method of Christ! Never to be forgotten is the mother's cry of joy at the finding of her daughter after years of separation, the cry of joy at her rescue from disgrace.

Zaleukus, king of the Locri, issued a law against theft. The transgressor's eyes were to be pierced with red-hot irons. Behold, his own son becomes the first transgressor. Paternal love and judicial duty are pitted against each other in hard, painful battle. He loves his son beyond comprehension, yet esteemes as highly the sanctity of the law. What was he to do? Should he remit the punishment, the law would be trodden under foot. Yet the thought of piercing the son's eyes, sorely grieves the father's heart. Behold the just king and tender father devises a way by which justice is done both to his love and to the law. He had one of his son's eyes pierced, and then he gives one of his own eyes as a ransom for the other eye of his son. The effect of the deed of love was marvelous. His subjects saw that the law was upheld. In their king they saw equally exemplified both Justice and Love. And the son as often as he looked into the countenance of his father, was reminded of his unspeakable love; and as often as he was reminded of his own defect, he shuddered at the depth of his crime.

What are all such noble human deeds but a faint type

of the divine love which descended to us on Calvary, to celebrate its highest triumphs?

From the moment in which wretched and foolish man rejects Paradise in unbelief and disobedience, (the two fundamental sins) from this moment the faithful Father in love and mercy begins the search for his lost son, in order to win him back for Paradise. Beginning with the blood that flowed on Mt. Moriah, the blood of the lamb which protected the Jewish home against the angel of death; through all the stream of blood which in the Old Testament flowed on the sacred temple-spot, the spot sanctified by Abraham's sacrifice, God in shadows and types points to the hour when He would bring the greatest sacrifice of Love, when in the blood of His only begotten son, He intended to show how justice and love were to be reconciled in the triumph of divine grace.

Now it is done. The word of prophecy has been fulfilled: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

He may in blessing bow his head to the earth; in parting He may exclaim: "It is finished," the work of redemption, it is finished. Again the way is open to the Father's heart. It is finished! Follow him willingly.

In deep adoration we stand at the foot of the cross and remembering how oblivious so many have been to the Father's divine love, we are forced to exclaim:

My tears in grief are flowing, at Thy death, O Saviour mine.  
Ah, why is it so many forget Thy Love divine?  
'Twas wondrous love that opened the closed gates ajar,  
And yet—'tis all forgotten, the chords have died afar.

Are we among those who have forgotten? Are we in earn-

est with our love and thanksgiving? Can we stand and in face of the word prevail? "He is set for the fall and rising again of many," so that to one he is a savour of life unto life and to another a savour of death unto death. Grave and important question! It is a matter of life and death. Grave question at a most sacred place. We are standing at the foot of the cross; the one innocently slain calls: "All this I did for thee, what hast thou done for me?"

We lift up our eyes. There sounds a word amid the soft dripping of blood, amid the weeping of the women, amid the groaning of the executed, racked with pain; amid the rude scoffing. It is a word filled with poison;—one of death's candidates has uttered it. A wonderful word comes back, surprising both on account of the place and the lips that utter it. Then follows the reply, pressing the seal on that which we sing hopefully at the Manger:

To-day He opens wide the gate  
Of blessed Paradise  
The Cherub does not stand in wait  
Glory to God, Allwise.

The great work is finished. The one ON the cross has finished for those BELOW the cross, the work entrusted to him by the Father. WILL IT BENEFIT THEM? The reply sounds from the cross in phone and antiphone. Inscribe it on your heart. The two criminals are the representatives of humanity, symbolically their fate is that of all humanity. As on the cross they were to the right and left, thus will it be on the judgment day, either on the right hand or left. There is no middle way.



## AT THE CROSS MEANS AT THE CROSS-ROAD.

What is the cross to you?

- 1) A matter of hatred or scorn?
- 2) A call to God?
- 3) It must be either—life or death.

Lord strengthen us, to meditate Thy passion  
 To merge into the sea of love, faith's fashion,  
 Of love, that moved Thee from sin's dread and vile,  
 to reconcile.

## I.

A murderer at the right, a murderer at the left of the Saviour of men, in fulfillment of prophecy: "He was numbered among the transgressors." And as the pains overpower the one at the left, as death moves up slowly toward the heart, starting from the stiffening limbs, while furious hatred below is still heard, as in rudeness it heaps scorn and scoff upon the picture of misery upon that central cross,—the criminal's wrath also vents itself in impotent taunt: "If Thou be Christ," that is, the promised Messiah, for whom Israel is waiting, "Save Thyself and us." It was an expression of scoffing doubt directed at the noble sufferer, who like a lamb opened not his mouth before his shearer. Could He really suffer what He is suffering, without resistance, if he were what He pretends to be? Not satisfied with insolence, he adds to his doubt: "Save thyself and us." The murderer who deserves a hundredfold the punishment meted out to him, puts himself on a basis with him, in whom not even the searching eye of the Roman governor had found any guilt, "nothing worthy of death," with him who could meet his enemies with the question: "Who among you convinceth me of sin?" And what a frame of mind in this criminal, in addition to his insolence! In view of a horrible death, he has NO thought of the Judge, before whom he must soon appear to give account of himself, no penitent remem-

brance of a life of failure, no terror on account of the blood shed by his nefarious hand, blood, which like Abel's, was crying unto heaven. For this cause alone he drags down the Holy One into his sinful fellowship, that he might free him from the sufferings, the just punishment for his sins, that He should preserve his miserable life, in order that he might go on in sin. Do you not shudder at the demoralization into which poor man is liable to sink?

And is not this murderer, with his villainous hatred and poison, a type of the misery slumbering in every human heart?

Here we pass our days ungrateful in spite of the daily evidences of the love of God towards us, indifferent towards his commands of love, loveless, thoughtless, corrupt in thought, word and deed. Alas, how many spend their lives as if there were no Father in heaven. Whenever He calls to the communion of saints, the most paltry pretext suffices to excuse our absence. But let pleasure or the dance summon us, and we know of no hindrance to keep us away.

But let sorrow, one of the consequences of sin, in some of its manifold forms invade our life. Behold the wretched worm of dust and ashes, instead of repenting, instead of crying, "Lord, be merciful, forgive my sins," after the manner of the murderer on the cross, drawing God down into his sinful fellowship, as if there were the purest harmony between his Creator and himself, as if the tie of love had never been broken by thousands of sins. Like that malefactor, he knows but one cry: Lord take away my sorrow! God, however, in His unsearchable wisdom does not remove earthly suffering, for it is sent to purify man in the fiery oven of tribulation, ripen him for the eternal garner in the burning heat of summer. But instead of recognizing God's holy intentions, we hear the sufferer rave in poisonous doubt: "There is no God, for He does

not help me in spite of my prayer." The rebellious heart is given over to grim hatred and stubbornness: "Is this a God of love, who permits such suffering?" Blind to all his past disobedience and uncleanness, he raises his voice in the miserable complaint: "Wherefore have I deserved this?"

Moral indifference is incapable of understanding the drawing love of God. Hatred sets itself against God. Thus murderous hatred against the Lord of Love wanders, errs, strays over the world, and never realizes that by its very deeds it honors the Lord, to whom it denies the honor of love. For man feels only hatred toward that which in moral greatness meets him to shame him; man will not consent to moral obligation, although he well feels the justice of its claims; therefore, when punishment claims its right, there we find grim hatred in the place of humble submission. Then, as is so often the case, we hear: "We hate you, because of the truth on your lips."

You do not see your face in this mirror? Perhaps though in the following: "O yes, there must be a God, there must be faith; what would become of our world if there were no God, no faith?" Thus you say. But you do not wish to recognize God's claims on you. You thoughtlessly overlook them. Can there be a baser practice than to confess the necessity of a Saviour, and yet not follow his voice? For you He hangs on the cross, yet you pass by, wagging your head: "What is that to me?" Is not this scorn perhaps morally lower than hatred, since you do not attain even to an awakening of your conscience? The Cross of Christ, what is it to you? Hatred and scorn?

## II.

The other malefactor thus far has not dared to address the Lord; in the deep feeling of his guilt, he realizes not only

that He is in like condemnation, but that as Abraham told Dives, a deep gulf is fixed between the murderer and that righteous one, who was being slain for telling the truth. Yet, at the vicious word of his fellow his heart revolts. A word of reproof, an open confession, and a humble request sound from his lips. The murderer to the murderer, and yet a word of reproof. An open confession not only of their own guilt, but also of the guiltlessness of Him who hangs on the cross beside them. An open confession, by which, in spite of his consciousness of guilt, he dares to reprove those who stand below the cross. And lastly a request, which touchingly gives evidence how quickly the human heart appreciates the way to the Saviour, appreciates the only true Saviour, after the first step has been taken, the step of conviction. We are all sinners. There is none that doeth good, no, not one.

At the left, sorrow makes a heart to lift itself up in grim hatred. At the right, the heart humbly bows: I have deserved it, Lord, strike me. If I am yet saved, it is grace and nothing but grace..

And this is the first experience of grace which comes to him, the first reward of his sincerity, that in the midst of the shadows of death, the Lord imparts to him a luminous view of the truth. The man of sorrows and blood at your side, is the one that taketh away the sins of the world. In contrast to the scornful word of doubt: "If thou art the Christ," this one receives the consoling certainty: This is He, of whom the prophets told, whose blood was reflected in all the bloody sacrifices of the old covenant; it is He, the everlasting high priest, who once for all, beareth the sins of mankind, who now gives his life a sacrifice for many.

The first step on the way of life is here plainly pointed out: Conviction, confession of sin, and refuge in the sin-

bearer. And as a result of this humble disposition, courage is found for the confession before many witnesses, the only, but decisive deed of newly awakening faith, which for the dying remains the last step.

Do you understand the meaning of this sermon? If you wish to battle against the malefactor at the left, who lives in us all, as the one on the right battled against him, here is shown the way, the only way. It is, conviction of sin.

How is that? Am I to compare myself with the murderer? Indeed, for it is not a question of HOW you have sinned, but a question of THAT you have sinned. If any man, fully conscious of the fulfillment of life's duty and civic honesty on his part, if any woman, conscious of her purity, shrank from such a confession, as if it were a matter of unmanly weakness, could there be really nothing to sin, since it required a sacrifice such as we see there hanging on the cross? Is it not rather cowardice to turn away from the mirror held before us in the form of the cross of God's Son? Is it not rather unmanly weakness to be slow in recognizing a duty, which on Calvary is plainly written in bloody hand-writing.

"What have I done amiss?" someone exclaims in strange self-deception. And the Scripture in holy earnestness retorts: "He who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Where in the immeasurably wide field of opportunity is that evidence of your love, which grateful love requires? Every tear which you did not dry, when you might have done so, weighs heavily in the divine balance.

What evil have I committed? Would you care to lay open all that you have thought, that you have said and done, even in the hearing or in the sight of father, mother, sister and brother? And if not, God knows it all. And every innocent creature who has been poisoned by your foolish words,

every unfortunate soul whom you have advanced on the road to destruction, is inscribed on the pages of God's book of life, in which the least has equal value with the most influential on earth.

A most formidable influence now marches over the earth like a mighty army, devastating more life, working more distress, carrying along with itself more torrents of blood and tears than the most horrible murder or the bloodiest war. It is apostacy from God, which goes hand in hand with apostacy from morality, peace, progress, and all blissful order. And will you place yourself above the murderer on the right, can you boast yourself as one not in need of grace, when your Christian example, as that of one to whom the weaker ones look up, when your word, your indifference and unfaithfulness towards the church, will advance defection instead of staying it? For the sake of Christ on the cross, look into the mirror, and let it speak to you. What does the cross of Christ mean to you? Is it a call to God?

### III.

And now the word of grace. "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." The first word on the cross is still a petition to the Father in heaven: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The sacrificing high priest interceded for his people. Now He knows that his prayer has been answered, his sacrifice accepted. He has truly borne our sins in his body on the cross. It has been realized in him: "Though your sins be red like crimson, they shall be as white as snow."

Mercifully now, therefore, after the manner of a victorious king, who from his elevated position witnesses the victory of his army, Christ turns to the petitioner: "Lord," thou

sayest; indeed I am the Lord of life and death; therefore, "verily, I say unto thee," out of the fullness of power. Your request is, "remember me;" not only will I remember thee, but "thou shalt be with me in paradise"—with me, the king of heaven. "When Thou comest into Thy kingdom." I am going thither now. Therefore, "today shalt thou be with me in paradise," today art thou to enjoy blessed freedom from sin, and partake of immediate communion with thy God. The malefactor on the cross becomes the herald who first brings to the redeemed spirits in paradise the message: Christ has won the victory, the victory which henceforth bespeaks freedom from sin, death and the devil.

The Highpriestly king through the malefactor promulgates the same assurance to a world which like him comes over on the Lord's side. The earth shaking in its very foundations; the graves opening their jaws, and the dead proceeding from them; the curtain in the temple rent from top to bottom; a heathen moved in view of such a death to make a good confession; a most wonderful death, showing in strange signs out of the pierced side the powers of a new and higher existence; the fear of the enemies of the dead Judas, and the newly awakened courage of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, which they did not dare to show for the living Christ; heaven and earth, the quick and the dead, nature and humanity—they all testify that the word of the crucified must endure forever. Whether the earth be split or the firmament go to destruction, the Word does not yield and is never shaken.

You are called Christians. Would you like your death to be like this death? You still enjoy a time of grace. But you do not know for how long. Then so live as to honor your Christian name. Accept centre and star of Christianity, Jesus Christ. Come to his cross, be reconciled to God. No reply is given to the malefactor on the left. His fate is sealed.

As now, with broken limbs, he departs, so will be his awakening, an awakening in terror. He would not be called a sinner. He needed no grace. Now grace has he none.

The blessed one on the right now lives with Jesus in happy communion, and what lips could stammer, in forethought even, the secret of divine love into which his soul has been merged, the glorious duties of divine love which have fallen to his portion. For all the buds which here spring up, develop and bloom in eternity to flowers glorious and divine.

"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," the Saviour says. Be in earnest about the fulfillment of the duty of love, in order that you may be in earnest also about grace. Each passing day, in your battle with the world, you may experience loving communion with God and practice it in that life of faith and love upon which grows the hope of eternal salvation. This is the cross. Choose now: Life or death.

I know of but one choice. God grant that our choice for life and death may be and remain this:

If all become unfaithful, I, Lord, will e'er be true,  
Lest there be none to worship in gratefulness to you.  
FOR ME thou sufferdest, Master, FOR ME in pain didst  
part;

Therefore in joy forever I bring my loving heart. Amen.

R. N.



IX.

**"It is Finished."**

By

**Dr. G. Baur.**

Consistorial Councillor and University Preacher at Leipzig.

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**GOOD-FRIDAY MORNING.**

Text: John 19, 30.

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit."

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Peace be unto all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Yes, beloved brethren, the Lord's own purchase, where Jesus is, there is peace; and those who are in Christ have peace. Whether storms brew without and great violence rages on life's seas, so that your frail barques are often well-nigh lost; if you have Jesus with you on the voyage, and if you pray to him: Lord, save us; we perish, he will rebuke the winds and the sea with his blessed Peace, be still. "In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." To seek this peace, the blessed and joyful peace which is the fruit of faith in Christ Jesus,—to seek this, I say, is the opportunity especially of this Holy Week. For this reason you are not to suffer the hallowed stillness of this week to be broken by the confusion which reigns in the world without, nor by the anxieties of life which hold captive so many hearts and deprive them of the "one thing needful."

During this week you ought to maintain the same mind which God awakened in Moses by his command: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." This very day indeed requires such a mind in us. For, Good Friday is the memorial of the day when mankind experienced the holiest and most blessed hour of its entire being, and also, when our race stood upon the holiest spot of earth. Good Friday carries us back to Calvary, to the foot of the cross, on which the Only Begotten of God died a malefactor's death, that we miserable sinners might be reconciled to God. At such a place, and in such an hour, inexpressible thoughts and feelings must stir the human heart, driving out pride and vanity, and bringing a sacred stillness. And what does the heart learn from it? Messages of eternal life ring down from the cross, which are the blessed heritage left us by the dying Redeemer in his cry of triumph and victory: "It is finished," messages, which tell the soul that by the death of the crucified, death itself has been destroyed, and life and immortality brought to light. "O sacred Head, now wounded," bow thyself in mercy unto us. Grant to us quickening tokens of thy presence. Fill our hearts with the spirit of devout and serious meditation; yea, with the spirit of repentance and faith, that we may indeed receive and believe those gracious words, spoken by thy dying lips, and keep and treasure them in our hearts, to be unto us spirit and life.

Our text is the immediate suggestion of the proper subject for our Good Friday meditation. Gathered in spirit beneath the cross, we are with one mind to consider this word of the Crucified: "It is finished." It may properly be noted that he does not say: "It is all over." His dying word was not the last sigh of a departing spirit, freed at last from the sufferings of the world. On the contrary, he says: "It is finished." Even his death was the free deed of his merciful love, by which

he finished his whole redemptive work appointed unto him by the Father.

The work of redemption has always been interpreted by the Church as consisting in a three-fold office: prophetic, sacerdotal and royal. And this interpretation rests not upon arbitrary ideas of men, but upon the very nature of redemption. To set forth the relationship, by which the soul may find a truly satisfying fellowship with the Father, the work of the prophet is, first of all, necessary, to declare and to explain the being and character of God and his relation to the world and mankind; and, following this, the work of the priest is needed, by whose mediation and intercession the true relationship between God and man is established; and to this must be added the work of the King, who most gloriously reigns and fulfills what was declared by prophet and done by priest. As this three-fold office had a place in the days of preparation, in the Old Testament, so it is necessary also in the fulfillment. The great Head of the New Testament must, therefore, fulfill this three-fold office; he must be the one true Prophet, High-priest and King. Let us see now in how far

#### JESUS CHRIST BY HIS DEATH FINISHED HIS REDEMP- TIVE WORK,

as regards:

1. His prophetic calling,
2. His high-priestly mediation, and,
3. His royal prerogative.

#### I.

While Jesus was preaching those matchless words of life, and testifying to their truth by his unique personality and many mighty works, the people confessed and said: "Behold, a

great prophet is risen among us," and, "God hath visited his people." For, a prophet, in the sense of the Holy Scriptures, is not merely one who foretells the future; but he is a mouth-piece of God, a man divinely called and sent, and divinely endowed with the Spirit and with power to declare the truth in its highest sense, the whole counsel of God. In the Old Testament, therefore, Abraham is called a prophet, because he declared to his house the revelation which God had made of himself. Thus, in the same manner also, Moses is a prophet, for he taught the children of Israel to reverence the glorious majesty of the law and to worship God, whom they had well-nigh forgotten amid the trials of their bondage. And the later prophets, who continued the work begun by Moses, spoke not merely of the future revelations of God's grace and the establishment of his Kingdom, but they continued also to preach to the people, to explain and enforce the knowledge of God, and kept constantly reminding them, that, as they valued their eternal salvation, they dare not forget God, but must serve him in faithful obedience. This was the work of an Old Testament prophet. And thus, he who came to fulfill the preparatory work of the old covenant in the new, also discharged the whole prophetic office by his perfect witness to God and his truth. The people, therefore, were right when they called Jesus of Nazareth that Prophet, mighty in word and deed before God and man.

But in fulfilling for all time that which the prophets had said and done, he is more than a prophet. Thus, the beginning of the epistle to the Hebrews declares: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son." The Spirit, who had been given unto the prophets of the Old Testament in divers portions and manners, dwelt in Jesus without measure, in all his fulness. The light, which shone in other prophets only now and then, became in

Christ the Sun of Righteousness—the Light of the world. The everlasting Word of God, which was known to others only in partial revelations, became flesh in Christ and is the very essence of his Being. Therefore, he is the true and faithful Witness, in whose mouth is no guile, and who spoke the truth as it is in God. And not alone by his teaching did he reveal the truth, but he is himself the truth, the revelation of God and the express image of his person. Therefore, whoso seeth the Son, seeth the Father. And, like that disciple whom Jesus loved, all believers may rejoice in the revelation of the great mystery: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, a glory as of the only Begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.”

And this is it, my beloved, what the Prophet of the New Testament, the Son of God, has revealed unto us—grace and truth: the eternal truth of God, before whom no unrighteousness can stand, and in the light of whose holiness our own fallen state receives its just punishment; but also the grace and mercy of God, who desires not the death of the sinner, but that he should repent and live, and who gave his only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. This revelation of the eternal truth and grace of God Jesus Christ finished in his death upon the cross. Even in his bitterest agonies the mouth of our holy Prophet was not stopped. Upon the cross he showed forth his and his Father’s boundless love, in that he prayed for his cruel enemies, who knew not what they were doing. Upon the cross he promised the penitent thief: “Today, thou shalt be with me in Paradise.” Upon the cross his loving care for his Mother, through whose soul a sword was piercing, and for the disciple whom he loved, showed that he would not forsake his own, but would comfort them and care for them in every trial and temptation. Upon the cross he showed by his thirst that he is truly

our Brother and shares our sorrows; and by his: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he demonstrated that he had humbled himself into the lowest depths of our infamy and bore all our sins. But upon the cross by his word of triumph: "It is finished," he declared also that he had made the utmost revelation of the truth and grace of God. For, truth which is confessed unto death is surely well established, and love which endures the death of the cross is perfectly guaranteed.

And we, who own him as our Lord and confess the truth of his Word, want to celebrate this day of his death so as to be a renewal of our allegiance to him, and a rejection of all the false prophets who would lead us astray and bring us to the leaking fountains of human wisdom, where the waters of life are not. Let us, therefore, confess, as Simon Peter once did: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and confessed that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

## II.

Though the prophetic calling did not content itself with the mere announcement of the future of God's Kingdom, this was nevertheless an integral part of the prophet's work. Through the law it had been found to be impossible to secure such communion with God as would give the soul perfect peace. The law only enabled earnest souls, conscious of their wide separation from God, to see more clearly their utter helplessness. Therefore, the prophets foretold the grace of God, which would accomplish what was impossible under the law; and they foresaw also the Redeemer, the God-man, who, according to the image of the personal union of the divine and human in himself, would receive all those who love his appearing and grant them union with God, and thus be the Mediator of the new and

everlasting covenant. And that which the prophets had thus seen and foretold, became deed and truth in Jesus of Nazareth; and his mediation between God and man, to which his own divine-human personality ordained him, constitutes his priestly office, by which all that he taught as Prophet is made possible of realization in the hearts and lives of believers. During his whole life the Lord Jesus mediated as our High-Priest. That which Isaiah had foretold more than seven hundred years before of "the Branch out of Jesse," upon whom would rest the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of the knowledge and the fear of the Lord—that was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. In him the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily; and in him, fallen and corrupt human nature is again lifted up into oneness with divine truth and holiness, and man is declared anew to be in the image of God. "To as many as received him, he gave power to become sons of God." Of him they learned, and unto him they confessed, that through him the Father in heaven visits his children, redeems them from sin and its curse, and grants unto them everlasting life. But as expressly as Jesus also revealed the truth and grace of God, in order to restore mankind to fellowship with the Father, carnal expectations of a kingdom of external splendor and power hindered his Kingdom from finding its true place in their own hearts. Those blinded souls still failed to grasp the terrible depths of their own ruin and the fearful power of sin, whose prey they had become. Even those who had become more deeply conscious of their sin and guilt also still lacked the highest revelation of eternal mercy, which alone could assure them that God would be gracious and remember their sins no more. Therefore, the High-priest of our profession had to fulfill the final and greatest requirement of his office. He had to take upon himself the whole burden of human sin and guilt, and atone for it in

his own body, as Isaiah also foretold:—"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Therefore, only his death enabled Jesus to say with respect to his Priesthood: "It is finished." Only after he had set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem, did he tell his disciples that all things which were written in the prophets concerning the Son of man should be accomplished. And just preceding today's text, it is written: "After this Jesus knowing that all things are now accomplished, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, saith, "I thirst." Thus again, the Savior testified that He has actually become partaker of the limitations and needs of our nature, and that his sufferings were real, pains as bitter as only a man could bear; but after that his triumphant, "It is finished," openly declared that his death was not the result of a conquest on the part of the world, but the victory by which he overcame the world. Nevertheless, for this victory a precious price had to be paid. The High-priest of our profession gave himself as the one eternally valid sacrifice. And what are the message and comfort of this sacrifice? The cross on Calvary is raised as the appalling sign of the terrible might of human sin, which did not stop short of lifting murderous hands against the Son of God. But at the same time it is also raised to be a quickening sign of the everlasting grace of God, who spared not his own Son, but laid the punishment of which we sinners were guilty upon him. that we might have peace. Thus, the cross of Christ most stirringly declares: "Be ye reconciled unto God." Turn with loathing from sin, which nailed the Son of the Highest to the



tree, and with rejoicing lay hold of the grace which the Father in heaven offers you in his crucified Son.

Beloved, let us so celebrate this day that this gracious message may truly reach our hearts. Let us not love this world, whose pleasures he renounced, and whose bloody hatred he took upon himself that we might be delivered from the bondage of the beggarly elements. No, rather let us most heartily consecrate ourselves to him, who purchased us with his precious blood to be his very own. Let us not trust in our own goodness, but seek in him a righteousness through his blood, which can cleanse the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. And may he, who upon the cross finished the sacrifice for sin, grant unto us both to will and to do that which is well pleasing in his sight.

### III.

As Prophet, Jesus became our wisdom; as High-priest he was made our righteousness and sanctification; and as King he will finally deliver us from the evil of this present world. As Prophet he taught the way of the Lord perfectly; as Priest he delivered those who believe in him from the guilt of sin. But his people are still in the midst of an evil and perverse generation, beset by many snares and dangers. But such a state of struggle for the children of God cannot continue forever, for God is not merely the All-wise, Holy and Merciful One, but also the Almighty Lord. And the Son is one in power with the Father; and he will, as the true and only King of his people, lead them to final victory and translate them from the Church militant to the Church triumphant.

His word: "It is finished,"—does therefore also apply to his kingly office, though his royal glory will not be fully revealed until the end of days, when all things are perfected

and made new. But he inaugurated his Kingdom, when he finished his work upon the cross. His cross became the stepping-stone to his throne. This is the sense of what is said after his resurrection: "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory." And the apostle says of the Author and Perfector of our faith, that "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." For the King, whose kingdom is not of this world, there can indeed be no other way to the throne of his glory; the Almighty himself in his infinite wisdom prepared none other. Therefore, the writer to the Hebrews says: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Jesus, our King, does not seek by external power to bring men into subjection unto him, but he strives to win them by the power of his great love. To show this love, in which he sought not his own things, but the salvation of the brethren, he laid aside his divine glory and took upon himself the form of a servant. And to let his light shine for his blinded enemies, he endured the deepest shame, and the bitterest sufferings. Throughout his whole ministry he showed that he had not come to condemn the world, but to save it; not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Thus, he won for himself a peculiar people as his inheritance, and implanted in their hearts a love which is stronger than death, and which overcomes all earthly trials and sorrows.

But also to the Church, struggling against the adversities of the world, he shows himself as the One, unto whom all power hath been given in heaven and on earth. And, in the case of individual believers, he proves his word, that to him, who seeks first the Kingdom of God, all needful things shall be

added. In the life of nations he makes the world's history its judgment, inasmuch as faithfulness to him exalts, and forgetfulness of him ruins a nation. These are monitory and warning signs of the final judgment, when the throne of his glory will be revealed unto all, and when every man shall receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they were good or evil, and into whose ante-chamber we shall all, and perhaps sooner than we think, be ushered by the messenger of death.

O beloved, these thoughts should deeply stir us. We are still living in the day of grace. Our King still seeks to win us by the power of his love. We still hear the tender plea of the cross: "Be ye reconciled unto God." O, let this plea not be in vain today. Let us hear it now; and when we leave the sanctuary, let it ring in our hearts amid the noise and tumult of the world, that we may not forget our allegiance to the Lord our King, and thus we shall escape the shame and pain of the Judgment.

And do thou, who hast purchased us with thy blood, grant that thy word of triumph and victory be fulfilled also in our perfect redemption. Let thy Word be a light upon all our ways. Fill our hearts with the comfort of that peace which thou didst secure for us upon the cross. Permit not the sufferings of this world to rob us of thy consolation, nor let the power of the world snatch us from thy hand. And grant, that at last, after a well spent life, we may take our departure in the full assurance that thou, the Crucified and Risen One, wilt receive our spirits into the Father's House. Amen.

F. C. L.

X.

## The Burial of Jesus.

By

John Quandt.

Pastor of the Evangelical Church in the Hague.

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### GOOD-FRIDAY EVENING.

Text: Luke 23: 50—56.

“And behold, a man named Joseph, who was a councillor, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their counsel and deed), a man of Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was looking for the Kingdom of God: this man went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb that was hewn in stone, where never man had yet lain. And it was the day of the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew on. And the women, who had come with him out of Galilee, followed after, and beheld the tomb, and how his body was laid. And they returned and prepared spices and ointments.”

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Good Friday evening. Again the day sinks to rest which once witnessed the hiding of the sun and the rending of the temple's veil; that day of which one so sweetly sings:

“O, day of gloom and sadness,  
Thy night of bitter weeping,  
Prepareth light and gladness  
For souls in Jesus sleeping.”

Now they bear the Holy One, the Crucified, from Calvary's

hill to the quiet garden, and lay him into the rock-hewn tomb, where never man had yet lain, thus fulfilling the prophecy of the evangelist of the Old Testament: "They made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death."

Jesus buried. O, are ye able to comprehend it, ye souls of Mary and Joseph, and thou Nicodemus, who once camest to him by night. Jesus buried. Those holy lips which so often prayed and spoke words of comfort, which warned and taught as never man spake; those blessed eyes, which searched men's uttermost souls and brought warmth to troubled hearts by the brightness of their love; those hands, which wrought so many deeds of kindness—they are buried. Jesus buried. O, are ye able to comprehend it, ye thousands whom he blessed, whose diseases he healed, whose iniquities he forgave. Jesus buried. Thou widow of Nain, who receivedst thy dead to life again, dost thou comprehend? Thou Centurion of Capernaum, whose child he restored before thou knewest it, dost thou know? Thou man born blind, whom he gave thy sight that thou sawest the Son of God, hast thou seen it—Jesus buried? Thou woman taken in adultery, whom he absolved with his gracious word: "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more," hast thou been told? And thou Mary of Bethany, who wast nearer to him than all his disciples, whom he understood so well and gave thee the assurance that thou hadst chosen the good part, art thou there? To thee he was so precious that thou gavest him thy best. Jesus buried. O, all ye souls whom he so richly blessed by his ministry, can ye grasp that bitter truth? And thou Church of today canst thou measure the depth of woe which those felt who had lost their All? O, try to fathom what it means when it is said: Jesus is buried.

But why must he also be buried? Was it not enough for his sacred Head to bow in mortal pain upon the cross? Could

he not gloriously come to life again, without being buried, and thus come down from the tree of shame and show himself among terrified enemies and rejoicing friends as the Prince of life? Why must he also be buried?

O, all ye, who have raised tomb-stones in yonder church-yard—one, two, three and more—one for mother, one on father's grave, those over the little mounds where the children sleep, that heavy one over the dust of husband or wife—O, tarry again by the side of that grave in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea. He who slept there had become like unto your best beloved, not only in dying, but also in being buried. Like your best beloved, so was he also carried out, a lifeless corpse, and laid into the bosom of the earth, away from your tender gaze. Jesus buried, why? For your sake and for mine, to quicken us in hope.

For, as he became like unto our beloved in being buried, so shall they become like him in being raised from the dead. As the grave could not hold him, neither shall it be able to hold you and yours. "But every man in his order. Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." Your sainted father. Your beloved mother sleeping in Jesus. Your child, plucked like an opening bud. Your husband gone home. Your wife of a year. Hear it, O hear it, beloved, the bells of Easter softly echo in the measured tolling of Good Friday: the solemn Requiem is broken by the Hallelujah-Chorus of Easter Day.

"Jesus Christ, my sure defence  
And my Savior, ever liveth;  
Knowing this, my confidence  
Rests upon the hope it giveth,  
Though the night of death be fraught  
Still with many an anxious thought."

Note again those who are standing about the tomb of the Lord. There is the councillor of Arimathea, a city of the Jews, a just man and devout, who also waited for the Kingdom of God, the same had not consented to their will and deed. He is a man of influence, one of the few rich men who are saved. He is a learned man, one of the few who is not wise above what is written, to the word of the cross was not foolishness, but the highest wisdom and ground of salvation. He is a brave man, who feared not the displeasure of Pilate, but boldly begged the body of Jesus. Are there men of prominence and influence here today? Are you also minded like Joseph of Arimathea? Do you have the courage in the highest places to acknowledge yourselves as followers of the Crucified? And do you rejoice to give of your substance to him? Joseph brought his fine linen for the burial.

And the women also are there. The evangelists tell us of only one woman who was among the enemies of Christ—that maid who accosted Peter in the house of Caiaphas,—the others were all the Lord's friends. Even today the Lord has the largest following among the women. Mary had the deepest comprehension of the Lord. Wherefore, my sisters, let no man take from you that good part which you have chosen. Hold fast to that which you have, that no man take your crown. Prepare him sweet spices and ointments—your prayers and your alms.

In obedience to the law they rested over the Sabbath. But rest becomes the silence of the tomb. Let us also rest. Yes, rest, ye humble souls, and dry your tears. Rest, ye weary and heavy laden, and consider the things which belong to your peace. Rest, ye tempted and tried, and pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Yes, let us all, who are here assembled in view of the grave of Jesus, find rest for our souls. Let

the whole earth be silent before him, and rest. This is the message of Good Friday evening,—Jesus is buried, but we answer:

“To me the darksome tomb  
Is but a narrow room,  
Where I may rest in peace, from sorrow free.  
His death shall give me power  
To cry in that dark hour,  
O Death, O Grave, where is thy victory? Amen.”

F. C. L.





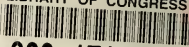
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